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OR, THE FERRET OF THE GOLDEN FETTERS.

A Romance of a Mysterious Man-Hunt.

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AUTHOR OF "THE BUCCANEER MIDSHIPMAN,"
"DASHING CHARLIE" NOVELS, "DICK
DOOM" NOVELS, ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

INTO THE DEPTHS.

A STEAMER was breasting the waves of the Atlantic upon her run southward to the Gulf of Mexico.

It was late at night, and saving her officers and crew, few were upon her deck.

CALMLY, HAND UNDER HAND, WITH ASTONISHING STRENGTH, HE BEGAN THE PERILOUS DESCENT.

Among those few were three persons who stood aft.

They had come upon deck when the last of the passengers had gone below to turn-in for the night.

Two of these three were in irons, manacled hands and feet; and, confined in their state-room by day from curious eyes, they were brought on deck by their keeper to get fresh air when darkness rested upon the deep.

The other of the trio was not in irons, but paced to and fro near the others, his eyes ever and anon instinctively falling upon his prisoners—for such they were.

One of the latter was a man with dark, foreign face, and yet who had the appearance of a gentleman born and bred.

The other was a man of tall form, military bearing and having the easy air of a man of the world.

He was elegantly dressed, wore a diamond in his scarf, its match upon his little finger, and a handsome watch chain crossed his vest.

His wrists were heavily manacled, and a chain connected them with the irons upon his ankles—the latter with a link chain long enough to enable him to walk.

The face of this man, as the light from the cabin fell upon it, was one to never forget, it was so full of expression—nay, of a power of fascination in its strange beauty that commanded admiration and respect.

"See here, senor; down in those dark waters of the Atlantic is escape from the doom that will surely be mine, and rest from further struggles," suddenly said the taller of the two men in irons, as he gazed over the taffrail down into the dark ocean waves.

"I am no fool, for I would never take my own life as long as there was a ray of hope to escape.

"I will go to the gallows, too, once the accursed detective keeper there gets me to Texas, but I shall not give up hope of escape until the rope is about my neck," said the other.

"Well, mine has been a checkered life, and my escapes from dying on the gallows have been simply miracles.

"But, it seems that I have come to the end of my rope, this time. I have played the boldest of games for years, have been gentleman sport, planter and adventurer, robber and murderer, if so you will, and I had, in playing my last card as a French count in Boston, believed that I would never be discovered to be what I am.

"But, yonder fellow, Dick Doom, well named the Death-Grip Detective, in the very moment, it seemed to me, of my success, dashed my hopes to the ground, and you, my partner in the game for gold, fell with me. He has us both in irons, in his power wholly.

"I have been already sentenced to die upon the gallows in New Orleans, but escaped from under its shadow; but I am going back there, now, and to die.

"What hope have I of escape from such an end, save in the depths of the sea? Down there all ends, and after a short struggle, a few moments of agony and agonizing thoughts, all will end, for these chains will carry me quickly to perdition."

"Well, you may jump into the depths, but I will not. You may thus end all by a plunge into the sea, and be borne far down with your irons, but I will do no such foolish thing, for in the end it is but a leap from the gallows, and that only when every ray of hope has gone from me.

"No, no, my dear senor, or count, just as you please to be called, I will stick to the ship and trust to good fortune to escape, for the chance may come to me."

"It may, and it may not. Surely it cannot come to me again, after all the escapes I have known in the past.

"Oh, no, the only way I can keep off of the gallows is to leap over this taffrail and thus find my doom."

"Do you really contemplate the act, seriously?"

"Assuredly I do."

"I could hardly believe you were in earnest."

"But I am—was never more so in my life, of which I am tired. From riches I have come down to poverty, as the money in my purse, my diamonds and watch and chain are all the wealth I have in the world, and should I live how hard would be the struggle to keep up my life of luxury as I have known it in the past."

"Then, too, I do not believe there is a disguise on earth I could assume to hide from the eyes of that man there, Dick Doom, the Death-Grip!"

"No, I shall take the leap, I think."

The speaker looked over into the dark sea as he spoke.

The steamer was a league off-shore, and she was gliding along swiftly over the smooth waters, for a dead calm rested upon the sea, as could be seen by the flapping sails of a vessel just left astern.

The light from some farm-house ashore glimmered over the waters, and upon which the eyes of the threatened suicide rested a moment, and then upon the vessel becalmed and rapidly fading out of sight astern.

"Ho, Dick Doom!" he suddenly called out; "thus do I disappoint you and cheat the gallows of its prey. I was not born to be hanged," and with a bitter laugh the man in irons sprung over the stern of the steamer into the dark depths of the sea.

CHAPTER II.

THE DETECTIVE'S STORY.

THE cry arose on the steamer, running from stem to stern:

"Man overboard!"

The vessel was slackened in her speed, but when the captain knew that it was one of the prisoners, one loaded with heavy irons who had jumped into the sea he ordered the vessel to be sent on her way with the remark:

"He went to the bottom like a stone."

"I cannot think so, sir, and I wish that you would send out boats to search the waters," said the detective.

But the captain looked at the detective as though he deemed him crazy, to believe that a man in irons could live an instant in the sea, and would not detain his vessel for a search.

The detective then stepped to the side of his other prisoner and asked:

"Did you know that Gibson intended to drop into the sea?"

"Yes, he said so, but I hardly believed he would be such a fool."

"He told you then of his intention?"

"He said that he saw no hope, so intended to cheat the gallows."

"I am not so sure that he has."

"How do you mean, Detective Doom?" asked the prisoner, in surprise.

"I do not believe that man was born to be drowned."

"You think he was born to be hanged?"

"Surely."

"He had even heavier irons on than I have."

"I know that, for I put them on him."

"Do you think he could swim with those irons?"

"I should hardly think so, yet still I do not believe he was destined to drown."

"Come, I'll see that you do not follow his example," and the detective took the prisoner below to his state-room and chained him there.

The good steamer went on her way, but a gloom seemed to have fallen upon the passengers.

They had heard of the midnight suicide, and, prisoner under sentence of death though the man was, it impressed them unpleasantly and the superstitious ones feared that the vessel would never reach port in safety.

Among the passengers was a gentleman from Chicago and his daughter.

The gentleman was a millionaire, an invalid, going South by a sea voyage for his health, which had been failing of late.

His daughter was a girl of eighteen, beautiful in face, exquisite in form and with a nature that was very lovable.

Upon the evening following the tragedy aboard the steamer, Dick Doom, the detective, was standing on deck gazing at the vessel's wake, as though expecting to see the ghost of the dead prisoner floating behind, then on the waters.

He was a youth possessing a slight, sinewy form, graceful as a woman's and quick in every movement.

His face was a study, for it was one that a woman might be proud of, so perfect was it in every feature, so full of real beauty, yet at the same time stamped with manliness.

He was neatly dressed, wore a slouch hat, and might have been taken for a student rather than a man whose deeds as a detective had gained for him a name of being a wonder as a Secret Service Ferret.

His other prisoner was below, and the beautiful passenger from Chicago walked up to the young ferret and said:

"Pardon me, sir, but are you a detective?"

"Yes, miss, I have the honor of being a member of the Secret Service."

"Your name is—"

"Dick Doom, miss."

"And mine is Clarice Carroll."

"May I consider this an introduction and enter into conversation with you?"

"With pleasure, Miss Carroll, for we are fellow passengers," was the response of the young detective.

"I wished to ask you about your prisoners, Mr. Doom?"

"What would you know about them?"

"All that you care to tell me, for I admit that the man who committed suicide last night had a strange fascination for me."

"He had wondrous eyes, for I have seen him on deck and in the cabin, and, do not think me bold for saying so, but if ever I fall in love with any man it will be with just such a one as the suicide."

Here was a strange confession for a young girl to make, and the detective so regarded it.

He gazed upon her with deepest interest and said: "That man, Miss Carroll, had a face for his soul's screen, for, a man of wondrous fascinations, he was yet one of the blackest-hearted men in the world.

"A fast youth in Kentucky, he poisoned his father to get his inheritance, and rendering a service to a young planter, he won the heart of the planter's sister, a mere child, and made her his wife to in the end get rid of her by murder.

"He has plotted for fortunes and won them."

"He has stained his hands with murder time and again, and, run down and captured, tried and sentenced to death, he has invariably escaped."

"He escaped from prison in New Orleans just before the day set for his execution, went to Mexico with the one who aided him, and who, a French noble, killed in rescuing an American family from bandits, he impersonated him, playing his cards so well that he very nearly wrecked the life of the lovely girl who believed him to be all he represented himself to be.

"Robbing her brother and herself of their jewels, he followed them to Boston and there I tracked him down, as I had before run him to earth.

"I was taking him to New Orleans, with his accomplice, who is wanted in Mexico for crimes committed, when he leaped into the sea."

"To his death."

"I am not so sure of that."

"Well, he was a wonderful man, Mr. Doom, and I thank you for telling me of him; but still, a man with his face, I fear, even if he were ever so wicked, could win my heart, and, bad as he was, I am glad he is dead, for my *beau ideal* of splendid manhood is gone, never to be met again," and Clarice Carroll sighed for her lost idol.

CHAPTER III.

THE RESCUE.

MR. CARROLL'S health was much benefited by his sea voyage and stay in the South, and in the early spring he had started with his daughter for their home in Chicago.

Clarice Carroll had found the young detective a most enjoyable companion, and the two had talked much together on the run to New Orleans.

There they had parted, Dick Doom to continue on to Texas with his prisoner after making his report to the chief of police in the Crescent City of the fate of the man in irons who had leaped into the sea.

And the face of that suicide still haunted Clarice Carroll wherever she went.

"How could a man with such a face, with those glorious eyes, be so vile as he was painted?"

"Could she love one who was thus wicked?"

Such were the questions she asked herself over and over again, as the time passed on.

The father and sister had reached a western city upon their return homeward.

Mr. Carroll had met there an old friend and had gone to the club with him, while his daughter sat in the pleasant parlor of their suite of rooms enjoying the latest novel.

Midnight came and the rumble of vehicles in the streets had died away.

The sound of footsteps along the corridors of the hotel were no longer heard and gradually the night was settling into silence profound.

Still Mr. Carroll did not return; still the maiden read her novel.

At last she dropped off to sleep in her easy-chair, the open book in her lap.

How long she slept she did not know. She was awakened by wild cries ringing through the hotel.

"Fire! fire! the hotel is on fire! Save yourselves who can!"

Clarice awoke bewildered. She had not the power of motion, and, unmoving, heard the loud cries of terror and dismay.

Fully dressed though she was she could make no effort to save herself; she was dazed, powerless.

Suddenly the door was opened, and a man appeared there.

Behind him was a volume of smoke and crackling flames.

But the man was calm, though he acted quickly.

It was not her father, as she had hoped and believed.

Instead, he was a tall, powerfully-built person, with a soft slouch hat shading his face, and a voice that was firm and encouraging, as he said:

"The hotel is on fire, Miss Carroll, and all escape by the halls and stairway is cut off; but I can save you if you will blindly trust yourself to my care."

Something in his look and tone commanded obedience, and she responded:

"I will do so. What is to be done?"

"First, have you any valuables you wish to save?" and still there was no flurry in voice or manner.

"Oh! my jewels!"

"And my father has most valuable papers, too."

"Where are they?"

"In that trunk."

"Quick! give me the key."

He seized them from her grasp, opened the trunk, and commanded almost sternly:

"Get them!"

She obeyed, getting a morocco case and leather wallet.

He thrust them into a small sachet, slung it about his neck, and grasping a strong trunk-strap, said:

"You must allow me to strap you to my back, for we descend by the life-rope here, and there is no time to make two trips."

He took the life-line, made it fast to a ring-bolt in the window-casing, threw the other end out, and, placing the leather strap about her waist, looped the ends and passed his arms through them, thus slinging her upon his back.

Then he stepped up into the window and glanced coolly down upon the crowded street and the upturned faces.

The hotel was, upon three sides, now, a mass of flames; but upon that side only, here and there, was fire bursting from the windows.

People in flight had leaped from the windows; others had been suffocated, while many, in their horror, had lain down to die.

Out of the window gazed the bold rescuer. Every eye was upon him, and upon the young

one now borne on his back, with her arms clasped firmly around his neck.

Then from below, rising above the hoarse voices of the firemen, came the cry:

"My child! my child! Save her for the love of God, save her!"

"Father! father! I am safe," went back the cry, even in that awful moment there being no despair in her tones, but perfect trust in her preserver.

A wild cheer greeted her words, and all saw the brave stranger kneel upon the window sill, then lift her clear of it while he grasped the safety-line with one hand.

Another moment and he had swung himself clear and was hanging seventy feet in mid-air above the pavement.

But all, while watching him in breathless silence, saw that he did not slip with his double weight, did not come down with a rush; but calmly, hand under hand, with astonishing strength, he began the perilous descent.

He paused an instant, with his feet upon the sill of the window below to rest, and then once more came on, just as flames burst out of the room he had left.

Again he descended steadily and slowly, and once more paused to rest.

Upon the second floor he halted longer than before, and there was a cry for ladders to be raised to his aid.

But, before help reached him, he had again begun the descent, and, a minute later, amid the wildest cheers, reached the ground, and the lovely girl whom he had saved was clasped in her father's arms.

Then Mr. Carroll turned to express his gratitude to his preserver, but, he was gone.

He had suddenly and at once slipped away in the crowd and disappeared.

CHAPTER IV.

THE UNKNOWN.

To another hotel had Mr. Carroll and his daughter gone, after the escape from the one which had so nearly ended the life of Clarice.

The little sachet, which the rescuer had brought down with him had, in the excitement of the moment, been forgotten, and though it contained the young girl's jewelry and most important papers, worth a small fortune to Mr. Carroll, its loss, if lost, was not taken into consideration in the remarkable escape.

Entertained by his friend at the club, Mr. Carroll had remained until a late hour and only when near the hotel had discovered with horror that it was his own stopping-place that was on fire.

He felt sure that Clarice had retired, and as he saw white-robed forms of men, women and children leaping from a death by fire to perish by a fall, he was almost paralyzed with grief and terror.

How could his daughter, up on the fourth floor escape death?

Then arose a cry and the words:

"That is a brave man indeed!"

"Cool as an icicle!"

"And he is bringing a woman down with him, too."

A cheer arose at this, and Mr. Carroll beheld the stranger with his daughter in his arms.

He recognized his room as being in the center of the building, and he knew the dress worn by his daughter.

The agony of the father can be imagined as he watched the downward course of the brave stranger, for he had called out a moment before:

"A hundred thousand dollars to the man who will save my child."

Then the crowd had kept him from rushing into the burning building.

Ten minutes after he had clasped his daughter in his arms, and then, when he turned to find the stranger he was gone.

"Who is he?"

No one knew him.

"Can no one tell me his name?"

Not a man answered.

"I will find him," he said, as he made his way through the crowd.

"He slipped away, sir, as though he did not wish to be known," said a man near.

"He was a tall, splendid-looking fellow, with long blonde hair and whiskers, while he wore a slouch hat.

"He looked like a Southerner, or a frontiersman," another said.

"Father, I will know him if ever I see him again," whispered Clarice.

So to another hotel they went, and as their baggage had been lost, Mr. Carroll decided to take the train the next morning for their home in Chicago.

But he inserted in each of the city papers the following notice on the editorial page where it could not fail to reach the eye of a reader:

"Will the brave stranger, who rescued a young lady from death in the hotel fire last night, communicate immediately with Samuel Carroll, Hyde Park, Chicago, Ill."

"You are sure you got the papers in the leather wallet from the trunk, Clarice?" asked Mr. Carroll the next day as the two sat together in the palace car on their way home.

"Yes, sir, I got that, and my jewels, for the stranger said to me that if I had anything of value to get it then, and I did so."

"There was a roll of money, some three thousand dollars, which I forgot whether I slipped under the rubber of the leather case, or just threw into the trunk."

"I think, sir, that the money was there, but in the excitement of the moment I really forgot."

"Indeed, I do remember seeing the money, but forgot now just where, and if I put it in the sachet or not."

"Well, it is of small matter, my child, and though the papers are of great value, let them go too, while I will get you jewelry even of more value than you had before, so glad am I that you escaped without a scar."

"You are very kind, father; but I think the gentleman swung the sachet about his neck, and of course will hunt you up and return it."

"Of course; but do you think you would know him again?"

"Anywhere, father, for the impression of his face is lasting."

"I should think so under the circumstances, Clarice."

"It is not altogether that, father, but the

fact that I believed there was only one such face in the world.

"Do you remember the prisoner who sprung overboard from the New Orleans steamer?"

"Yes, he was under sentence of death and on his way to New Orleans to be hanged, when he took his own life."

"Yes, sir."

"I saw him but once, I believe."

"I saw him a number of times, father, and when that unknown man burst into my room at the hotel I could have believed that it was the prisoner, only this stranger had a blonde hair and beard, and the face of that prisoner was clean shav'n."

"It was a startling resemblance to me, papa, though perhaps others might not have noticed it as I did."

"Well, he is unfortunate in resembling such a criminal as that man was."

"But what splendid notices the papers gave your unknown preserver, and not a trace of who he is could they find, while the clerk of the hotel told me that he could remember such a person who had arrived the day before, but could not recall his name."

"But here we are in Chicago, home again once more, my child, and oh! what would my home have been without you," and the voice of Mr. Carroll quivered with the emotion that swept over him as he recalled the narrow escape from death of his daughter through the courage of one wholly unknown to them.

CHAPTER V.

THE RETURN OF THE SACHET.

THE home of Mr. Carroll was one of the handsomest in the pretty annex to Chicago of Hyde Park.

It occupied a commanding position upon the lake-shore and a fine avenue, the grounds took in something over a square and were ornamented with beautiful trees arbors and evergreens.

The mansion was of stone, commodious and comfortable, and furnished with elegance and refinement which showed a cultivated taste.

Several years had Carroll spent abroad traveling with his daughter, under the care of a most competent governess, and she had received every advantage which money could buy.

The library was most expensive, the dining-room large and the service rich and costly, while the parlors ran the whole length of the mansion.

The bed-chambers were charmingly furnished and situated, and Clarice had devoted her time and taste to making a perfect home, luxurious in the extreme.

No better servants were to be found, the stables were filled with fine horses and vehicles, for Clarice had her own team of phaeton ponies and riding horse, in addition to the carriage pair and her father's especial driver and saddle animal.

There was a conservatory filled with the choicest plants and flowers, a billiard room, bowling alley, shooting gallery, tennis and croquet-grounds, and in fact all to make life enjoyable within doors and out, for there was a music room, art gallery and what Clarice called her "museum," a room devoted to souvenirs of travel she had picked up here and there.

With a millionaire for her father, and an only child, Clarice had a very large income at her command, and yet did not abuse it in the least.

She had hosts of friends, yet never had been looked upon as being in love with any one of the handsome and eligible beaux who visited her, though there were scores of them only too anxious to win the beauty and the heiress.

And back to this home went Clarice after her winter's ramblings with her father in the South, the home which she had so nearly missed ever returning to.

The papers had made known her narrow escape from death, and lauded to the skies her brave unknown preserver, so modest with his courage that he hid from the expression of gratitude that would have been showered upon him.

The maiden found herself quite a heroine, and also discovered that the unknown rescuer was a hero.

Her lady friends hoped that the stranger might be found, as they had a curiosity to see him, while admirers of Clarice trusted that the unknown hero might never turn up, as he was certain to prove a very dangerous rival to them.

Such was the situation one week after the return of her father and herself to their home.

One morning as Mr. Carroll and Clarice sat at breakfast together a messenger arrived with

a package which he said he would deliver only to the millionaire in person.

A note however he had sent in by the servant and breaking the seal Mr. Carroll cried quickly:

"We have found him Clarice."

"Found whom, father?"

"Why, your unknown hero, of course, for here is a note from him."

"I will read it aloud."

Then Mr. Carroll read as follows:

"THURSDAY, May 1st, 18—.

"MR. SAMUEL CARROLL:—

"Inadvertently I walk'd away with your sachel of valuables on the night of the hotel fire in St. Louis, and, as I had sent my baggage to the depot, hastened to catch a train for the East.

"I discovered afterward your sachel, and recalled that Miss Carroll had placed in it some important papers and her jewelry, yet, not knowing even your name I was forced to await my return from the East before returning the packages of value.

"I learned in St. Louis yesterday your name and address, so send you the sachel by reliable messenger, with the hope that you will find all in it just as it was upon the night of the fire.

"With the hope that neither Miss Carroll or yourself suffered any ill effects from the shock you had to undergo, I remain with respect,

"LEO LEFFINGWELL."

"Well, Clarice, what do you think of that?"

"A very manly note, sir, with no reference to the service he rendered me; but where is he, papa?"

"There is no address given."

"The messenger will know, sir."

The messenger was at once sent for, and he brought in the sachel with him, neatly folded and sealed.

"Well, my man, I am Mr. Carroll, so let me have the package."

"You will receipt for it, sir?"

"Oh yes, and here is for your trouble."

"The gentleman paid me, sir."

"Yes, but that is for yourself."

"Now, where is the gentleman who gave you this package for me?"

"I was called to the Grand Pacific Hotel, sir."

"All right, that will do," and armed with his receipt the messenger left, while Clarice opened the package.

There was the little sachel, with the shoulder-strap about it, and within was the box of jewelry and leather case of papers.

"Yes, the papers are all here, Clarice."

"And my jewelry, but not the money."

"That is not to be considered, for it was not put into the sachel."

"Of course not, father, or it would be here."

"But you will go to the Grand Pacific and look up Mr. Leo Leffingwell?"

"At once."

"Crumbs, order my carriage for me," and the millionaire soon after went off in search of the unknown rescuer of his daughter.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MIDNIGHT VISITOR.

THE summer has passed and the autumn has come.

The winds sweep over the lake, chilling the air, and rustling the falling leaves in the home of Clarice Carroll.

Rumors have been going the rounds that Clarice had found her "hero," and that he was a man of aristocratic name and bearing, although he dwelt upon the Nebraska plains, where he had a large cattle-ranch.

Mr. Carroll had been called away for a couple of months, to make a hasty trip to England and the Continent, on business, and Clarice had gone to spend the summer with friends who had a home upon the lake-shore.

And thither it was said that Leo Leffingwell had followed her, engaging rooms at the summer hotel not over a couple of miles away from the home that Clarice was visiting.

He had taken a parlor and bedroom, had his valet, his driving and riding-horse, and it was said that he was very rich, a fact which caused the poor lovers of Clarice to wonder why the riches of this world could not be more evenly divided.

Leo Leffingwell, rumor had it, was a man of most *distingué* appearance, tall, splendidly formed, with golden hair and beard, the former worn falling in waving manes upon his broad shoulders, and the latter reaching almost to his waist.

His eyes were large, intensely black, and full of expression, a certain dreamy look haunting them that was very fascinating to the one upon whom they were turned.

He was a man of courtly manners, dignified,

brilliant, when warmed up in conversation, and one who knew the world well.

There were rides on horseback in the morning, drives in the afternoon, sails on the lake by moonlight, and in fact the couple were almost constantly together.

There was a tournament given, and Leo Leffingwell won the first prize by his splendid horsemanship, and he had the honor of crowning Clarice Carroll the "Queen of Love and Beauty."

There was a rowing-match upon the river, and once more Leo Leffingwell was the victor, as he was in a shooting for prizes soon after.

In fact the handsome cattle-king, as he was called, proved himself an expert in all manly sports.

It was not to be wondered at then that Clarice Carroll, owing him her escape from a fearful fate, and also regarding him as her beau ideal of manhood, learned to love him with all her heart and soul.

At last the season drew to a close, the winds on the lake became chill, and Clarice went back to her home to meet her father.

Leo Leffingwell escorted her as far as the city and then took the train for his home in the far West, promising to return early in the autumn.

The gay season of Chicago began with Clarice Carroll still the reigning belle in society, and her many admirers were delighted to know that the man to whom it was said she was engaged, was not in the city, thus giving them a clear field once more.

With a maiden at once beautiful and fascinating, and possessed, it was said, of half a million in her own right, left her by her mother, with the prospects of twice as much more from her father, every effort must be made to keep her from wedding one not of her own city, it was argued.

Among the gifts brought her from abroad by her father, were a diamond necklace, a pair of bracelets, superb solitaire earrings, a buckle and a comb, all valued at the large sum of thirty thousand dollars.

In addition to them she had a strong box full of jewels which had belonged to her mother, and were gifts from her father, among them those saved at the time of the fire.

The new jewels Clarice put on one night to attend a reception, and upon their return home with her escort, her father—who had not been feeling well—the butler said had retired.

"I will sit by the library fire, Crumbs, for awhile before I go up to my rooms, so you need not wait up; I will send Jule down to turn out the lights," she said to the butler, who bowed and gladly retired to his rest.

For some time did the beautiful girl sit by the glowing fire, her thoughts busy, for she seemed in a mood that was unhappy and disquieting.

"Then she arose with a sigh, and, stepping to the iron door set in the wall, and where her father kept his valuables and she her jewels, she turned the knob to catch the "combination" and opened it.

Then she took off her necklace, bracelets, earrings and comb, and laid them in their case, taken from a tin box in which were her other treasures—a fortune in themselves.

Their beauty caused her to stand gazing at them for an instant, and then, with another sigh, she was replacing the tin box when she saw a shadow from the chandelier fall upon her and heard the words hissed into her ear:

"Make a move, or utter a cry, and I will kill you."

"Keep quiet and you will lose your jewels, not your life."

Started though she was she uttered no cry, but turned and faced the one who uttered the threat.

She saw before her a man clad in rough clothing, the collar of his coat turned up, a muffler about his neck and yet whose hands were gloved and face was masked completely.

In one hand he held a knife, and with the other had grasped her arm.

White as death Clarice Carroll turned, as she looked upon the masked robber, while from her lips fell the words in a tone of horror:

"My God! I know who you are!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE DISCOVERY.

SWEETLY the maid of Clarice slumbered in her easy-chair, toasting her toes before the fire in the beautiful sitting-room upon the second floor, where everything bespoke beauty's bower.

She was awaiting the return of her mistress, and as was her wont, for she was a privileged person, Jule had put on her warm dressing-

gown and was sleeping away the hours in comfort.

But the fire burned low, and at last with a shiver Jule awoke.

"Why, it is five o'clock, and Miss Clarice has not yet returned home."

"It is not usual for her to stay out so late."

"Ah! but it is storming and that must have detained her."

Jule stepped to the window, drew back the heavy curtains and shading her eyes looked out.

The waves fell upon the lake-shore with heavy thud, the winds whistled savagely around the house and the whole earth was covered with snow.

"Oh! what a terrible night."

"I suppose Miss Clarice dared not attempt to take the long drive home, so has remained in town with some friend."

"But then the carriage would have returned with word, for fear her father would be anxious, and Crumbs would have come to notify me, for he is only too anxious to get an excuse to talk to me."

"Let me see, I have slept since nine o'clock, and I do not wish to go to bed for she may return."

"It will be nearly two hours before any one is stirring in the house, so I will brighten up the fire and take another nap."

She put on more coal, placed the blower on to enliven the fire, and taking a large Mexican blanket wrapped herself in it and once more settled herself to sleep.

But she could not sleep now, and said after a half-hour's trial:

"I hope nothing has happened to Miss Clarice."

Then she sat gazing into the coals and after awhile got up impatiently and said:

"I cannot stand this, for it is nearly six o'clock."

"I will just go down and see if the carriage has returned."

She went to the door and found the gas burning brightly in the lower hall.

"Crumbs must have gone to sleep too," she muttered, and down the carpeted stairs she went to the large and spacious hall upon the first floor.

She did not find Crumbs in his nook in the rear hall, and so descended to the servants' department in search of some one.

The cook was just building her fire, and started at sight of her.

"Has the carriage returned, Nancy?" she asked.

"Yes, for David called me as he always does," the cook answered.

"Then Miss Clarice remained in town all night, for I have been waiting for her," said Jule.

"Miss Clarice came home before one o'clock, for Crumbs just told me so," the cook said.

"Miss Clarice did not come home, for she has not been near her room," cried Jule.

"Do you mean it, Jule?"

"I do."

"Oh! maybe she has fallen off to sleep in the library as she did once before," and Jule ran upstairs and opened the library door.

The gas was burning brightly there and in an easy-chair was Clarice Carroll.

"Oh, Miss Clarice! you will catch your death of cold," and Jule rushed to her side.

Then through the house rung forth one long, loud, wailing shriek that caused Mr. Carroll to spring from his bed and the cook and Crumbs to rush up-stairs in dire alarm.

When they arrived upon the scene Jule lay upon the floor unconscious, at the feet of her mistress.

But one look at Clarice Carroll, and exclamations of amazement and horror burst from the lips of Crumbs and the cook, just as Mr. Carroll, in dressing-gown and slippers entered the library.

A groan came through his shut teeth, and staggering he would have fallen, had not Crumbs quickly caught him in his strong arms.

And no wonder, for there sat Clarice with her dress all stained with blood, while in her white, neck was a knife, driven to the hilt, a knife with jeweled handle which she had herself purchased in Italy.

The sharp, slender blade had pierced the heart, and life had ebbed at once away.

The door of the iron safe in the wall was open, the tin box of jewels was there, and all was as though she had taken her own life.

There, upon the table near her, lay a letter unfolded, and Crumbs handed it to the stricken father, who sunk down in a chair to read it,

while from his lips fell over and again the words: "Dead! dead! my child is dead."

Crumbs had at once dispatched the coachman for the family physician and told him also to bring back with him a particular friend of the master's, one who often dropped in to play chess with him.

In a short while this friend, Mr. Wheatley, arrived and found the grief-crushed father still seated in the chair where he had fallen, clutching the letter, yet unread, in his hands, while the cook and Jule had borne the body of the beautiful girl to her room, whither the doctor was at once taken.

"Read it, Wheatley. Tell me what it means, for I cannot see a line of it," said Mr. Carroll.

Mr. Wheatley took the letter and read in a slow, low tone as follows:

"*My Own Loved Father:*—

"Can you ever forgive the horror and grief which I will cause you by my mad act?

"But, it must be, for I am tired of life, with everything around me to make life worth the living.

"I cannot tell you my secret, for he must do that, and will, when you call him to you, telling him that I am dead—that I died by my own hand.

"I deceived you last summer, and I had not the courage to tell you.

"Do not blame him, for it was my own romantic madness that made a secret of it.

"To-night I feel deepest remorse, and am determined to end my life.

"Forgive me, father, and Heaven cheer you in your grief.

"I wrote to him to-day, so he will soon be here to tell you all.

"You will find much of my money in the safe gone, but then, of late, I have given a great deal to charity, and it was mine to give.

"Your unhappy

CLARICE."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DOCTOR'S THEORY.

WHEN Mr. Wheatley finished reading the letter the poor father bent his face in his hands and groaned:

"Oh! why did she do this? My poor child a suicide? What secret can she have that would drive her to this?

"Is it Leo Leffingwell that she refers to in this letter, her last words to me?"

"My dear friend, who else knows of this letter she has left?" quickly asked William Wheatley.

"The butler, Crumbs, took it from the table and handed it to me."

"Can he be trusted?"

"Oh, yes; but why?"

"She hints of a secret as her reason for taking her own life, and this would imply, pardon me for saying so, that she has sought to hide some disgrace.

"This must not go forth to the cruel world, so let it be thought that she took her own life from no dread of shame, but from a desire to no longer live."

"My good friend I thank you, for no dishonor must be cast upon her dead name. I will not let this letter be seen."

"I will call Crumbs and explain to him that he must say nothing of this letter," and Mr. Wheatley rang the bell for the butler.

"Crumbs, you handed your master a letter found upon the table?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did any one else see it?"

"No, sir, for the cook was looking after Jule, who was just coming back to her senses."

"Crumbs?"

"Yes, Mr. Wheatley?"

"You must say nothing about this letter, for it will only cause unkind remarks to be made about your poor dead young mistress."

"I understand, sir, and I will not speak of it."

"You will not lose by this decision on your part, Crumbs."

"I thank you, sir."

"Now let us get your master to his room, and ask the doctor to come in to see him."

The poor man offered no resistance, and soon the physician stood by his bedside.

"There is no hope, doctor?"

"None, sir, alas!"

"But I remained to help Jule whom the shock has made really ill."

"Now, let me see after you, Mr. Carroll."

"Ah, doctor, I only wish that the shock had bereft me of my reason, or killed me, that I might not suffer as I do."

The doctor gave him a soothing draught and then called Mr. Wheatley aside, and said:

"Tell me all you know about this terrible affair, Wheatley."

"I can only tell you that Jule discovered her mistress dead in the chair and half swooned away."

"She drove the knife into her own heart, Wheatley, just as her mother did."

"Her mother!" gasped Mr. Wheatley.

"Ah! I should not have spoken, but I supposed, as you were Carroll's most intimate friend, you knew about what is a secret to others."

"No, I knew nothing of a former tragedy in the family."

"Well, her mother married Carroll at the demand of her parents, because he was very rich, having struck it rich in California."

"She was led to believe that the man she did love was dead, and one day she saw by a paper that he was alive and had made a fortune, but was living a bachelor somewhere in the East."

"She that night wrote her husband, whom she could not but admire and respect, a long letter, telling him of her discovery and that she would not live the wife of one man while loving another, and so ended what to her would be a most wretched existence."

"She drove a knife to her heart, just as Clarice has done, and was found by her maid, by a strange coincidence, seated in her chair fully dressed, as her daughter was."

"The shock nearly killed poor Carroll, but he rallied for the sake of his child and leaving California came to Chicago to go into business."

"This is terrible, yet I never heard of it before."

"It has been little known, I believe, but Carroll told me of it and asked if I feared that any great grief would cause his daughter to do the same."

"Of course it will now all come out, and she will be said to be insane, to have inherited her disease from her mother as beyond doubt she has, and which some grief has brought out."

"Have you any idea, doctor, of any grief which Clarice has had?" asked Mr. Wheatley cautiously.

"Do you know of her having been rescued from the burning hotel in St. Louis eight months ago?"

"Oh, yes."

"You knew her rescuer?"

"Yes, Leo Leffingwell, a splendid fellow, for I met him here at dinner several times."

"Do you know anything about him?"

"Well, no, nothing more than that he was a cattle-king in Nebraska, and a dashing, handsome fellow, rich and courtly."

"You knew that he spent the summer up on the lake where Clarice was visiting?"

"Yes, I heard so."

"Well, let me tell you that I heard something about the man."

"Indeed, and to his detriment?"

"That remains to be seen, for he is married."

"Ah! can this be possible?"

"So I was told, for a rumor has been going the rounds that he left the lake-shore about the time that Clarice did, and started home."

"A telegram came for him, it is said, which called him to his wife who was dying."

"This telegram was forwarded to the friends of Clarice, by the landlord of the hotel, who did not have Leffingwell's address, and they sent it to the care of Mr. Carroll."

"Now my idea is that Clarice opened it, to re-send to him, and discovering just what it was, in her love for the man and grief at his deceiving her, took her own life."

"This is my theory, though I may be wrong."

"And you may be right, doctor; but I would not speak of it."

"Oh, no, let it be thought that she had inherited madness from her mother, and was not responsible for her act."

"Yes, it is better so, far better," sighed Mr. Wheatley, and he brushed a tear from his eyes, for grief welled up in his heart at the fate of the beautiful suicide.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BEAUTIFUL SUICIDE.

A THRILL of horror ran through polite society in the city of Chicago, when it became known that Clarice Carroll was dead.

At first all manner of rumors were afloat as to the cause of her death.

Some said that she had been murdered by burglars for the jewels she wore.

Others averred that she had been poisoned by the doctor by mistake.

Another rumor was that she could not sleep and had taken an overdose of morphine.

At last the truth became known that she had been found dead in the library of her elegant home, a dagger driven into her heart.

That she had taken her own life people had said at first was preposterous, for why had she done so?

Without a reason she certainly had not done so.

No, it was the work of burglars of course, who had been surprised in their work.

But then the iron door of the safe in the library wall had been found open, all of her jewels were there, as she had taken them off and laid them away and not a thing had been disturbed.

Money in plenty was there, and yet not a dollar had been taken, so the sorrowing father had asserted.

This then showed that it was not the work of burglars.

At last the truth went the rounds, that she had taken her own life.

But why?

No one could answer, or would if they could.

Then some one who had known Mr. Carroll in the long ago, recalled the circumstance that the mother of the fair suicide had taken her own life, and without apparent cause, or if there was cause it had been forgotten by the narrator who gave the story to an enterprising news ferret.

This cast the mantle of charity over the act of Clarice, until another newspaper man, not to be outdone, came out with a sensational statement that Miss Clarice Carroll had been receiving devoted attention through the summer from a man whom she had every reason to love, as he had saved her life, but whom she had too late discovered was a married man.

Here was the "reason" in a nutshell, for the mad act of the young girl, and the last was accepted as the facts of the unhappy affair.

To her grave Clarice was borne one bright autumn day, when the sun, yet warm, had melted the early snow which had fallen, and the birds which had lingered in the cold North were singing merrily in the trees.

A vast concourse of people attended the funeral, most of them drawn by curiosity to see the elegant house and its surroundings, some with a morbid desire to gaze upon the dead face of the fair suicide, others from a passing acquaintance with the Carrolls, and a few from heartfelt sympathy and grief.

Mr. Carroll had roused himself from his prostration and had gone, attended by his devoted friend Wheatley and Doctor Langley.

He had uttered no word as they lowered the elegant coffin from sight, and only when the grave was filled in and hidden beneath flowers had he said softly:

"Let us go now, for all is over."

Back to the desolate home they went, Mr. Wheatley accompanying the sorrowing millionaire, and together the two sat in the library that night, the scene of the daughter's mad act, and talked of the dead.

The childless man was strangely calm now, and he seemed never to tire of telling his friend of his beautiful daughter.

"Wheatley, I must soon solve this mystery or I will go mad."

"You must help me in it, too, for you know all, you have read all the papers have cruelly said, and you have the letter that she wrote, so help me to clear away the clouds."

"I will do all in my power, my dear friend; but what would you have me do?"

"Find that man," was the stern rejoinder.

"Mr. Leffingwell?"

"Yes, Leo Leffingwell."

"Do you believe that he is a married man?"

"I do not know; I am unable to understand it all."

"He saved Clarice at the risk of his own life, he returned to me papers worth nearly a hundred thousand dollars, and her jewels."

"This placed us under everlasting obligations to him."

"I sought him out at the hotel, found him about to go West and urged him to remain."

"I brought him to my home and I felt that he loved my child ere he had known her a week."

"I then saw that she regarded him with the same affection."

"I did not ask him if he was married, and he said nothing more about himself than that he lived in Nebraska and had a large ranch there."

"Then I went to Europe, and Clarice went upon the lake."

"Leffingwell returned from Nebraska and spent the summer there."

"What happened there heaven only knows; but my child is dead, by her own hand, and I wish you to find Leffingwell for me, as I must, shall, know the secret to which my dead girl

alludes in her letter to me, and which I cannot even guess at.

"You will find him for me, Wheatley, will you not?"

Samuel Carroll had spoken in a low, but earnest tone, and his look and words indicated his sufferings.

Mr. Wheatley was a man of leisure, a bachelor, whom many had said was desperately in love with Clarice Carroll himself.

He was a well-preserved, handsome man for forty-five, who had a handsome home not far from the Carroll mansion, and a large income to sustain it.

If, as rumor had it, he had offered himself and been refused by Clarice, it had not broken off their friendship, and the young girl thought a great deal of him.

"Yes, Mr. Carroll, I will go to Nebraska and find this man Leffingwell for you," said William Wheatley.

But even as he spoke the butler brought in a card and handed it to his master who said excitedly:

"My God, Wheatley, he is here."

CHAPTER X.

LEO LEFFINGWELL.

THE card brought in by Crumbs had on it:

"LEO LEFFINGWELL,

"SUNSET RANCH,

"Nebraska."

"Oh, show him in at once, Crumbs," cried Mr. Carroll, and as the butler disappeared Mr. Wheatley said:

"I will be near if you need me; but I will leave you alone with Mr. Leffingwell now."

Mr. Carroll made no reply and William Wheatley departed by one door as the visitor was ushered into the library by another.

Mr. Carroll tried to rise to meet him, but after a second effort sunk back and was silent.

Entering the room Leo Leffingwell glanced quickly about him, and as his eyes fell upon the occupant he walked rapidly toward him.

He certainly was a very magnificent specimen of manhood, tall, erect, dignified and courtly.

He was dressed in black and carried a slouch hat with broad brim in his left hand, which was gloved, his right being bare.

His face wore a very serious, anxious look, and there was a quiver in his voice as he said:

"Mr. Carroll, you have the deep sympathy in your great grief of one who loved her as dearly as you do."

Samuel Carroll grasped the outstretched hand, drew the man to a seat near him and looked intently into his face.

The sunlight shone full upon it, and the dark, earnest, dreamy eyes met his own unflinchingly.

"Leo Leffingwell, you loved her too?"

"More than my life, sir, did I love her."

"You have heard of her death?"

"I saw by the papers that she was dead, and would have come at once to you, had I not been detained by an unavoidable circumstance."

"Do you know that she took her own life?"

"I have seen a number of conflicting stories, sir, from her having been killed by burglars to her taking her own life."

"I hardly knew which to believe."

"Which would you think was the truth?"

"That she had been killed, sir."

"But there was no robbery, and that alone would the motive have been."

"Was nothing taken, sir, from the safe, for the papers stated that it was open when she was found dead?"

"The safe is there in the wall, as you see, for yonder panel is the door."

"It is opened by a combination lock which Clarice and I alone knew the key of."

"Her jewels and her money she kept there as I always made it the repository of mine, and she came here to the library, before going up to her bed to put them away, as was her habit."

"She opened the safe, put the jewels in the box, and then God only knows what happened, for the door was open and she was found in that chair you are sitting in, dead."

Leo Leffingwell did not start from the chair, but simply passed his hand over the velvet arm in a caressing kind of way.

"And nothing was stolen?"

"Nothing, though there was one large diamond out of the necklace, as though it had been lost out."

"And was all of her other jewelry there?"

"All, I believe."

"And your bonds, and money which you say you kept there?"

"Nothing was taken."

"You have looked?"

"Yes, my friend Wheatley went over all with me, to see if we could find a clew to prove that it was not suicide."

"And her money, for she kept that separate did she not?"

"Yes, and considerable of that was gone, for I had given her fifteen thousand dollars in rents on some property she owned, and ten thousand of this was gone, yet she had given it in charity."

"You are sure of this, sir?"

"Yes."

"What proof have you, Mr. Carroll?"

"My dear sir, a man who came here and killed a girl for money would not have contented himself with ten thousand dollars, when I had double that sum in the safe, Clarice five thousand and jewelry of great value."

"That certainly looks reasonable, sir; but then I am trying to find some proof that it was not suicide."

"Mr. Leffingwell, I have proof that it was suicide."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes, wait."

Samuel Carroll arose and left the room.

He sought the parlor where William Wheatley was and soon returned with the letter in his hand which had been found upon the table by the dead girl.

"Mr. Leffingwell, I can trust you?"

"With your life, sir."

"Read this letter then, for it was written by poor Clarice the night of her death; it was written here in this room at my desk there, and left upon the table at your side."

"Her letter?" gasped the visitor in amazement.

"Yes, but it is not known to the public that she wrote a letter."

"No, no, I hid that secret from the cold and callous world."

"But, read it, please."

Leo Leffingwell opened the letter and read it slowly to the end.

When he had finished it a sigh escaped his lips, and he brushed his hand across his eyes.

"Well, Mr. Leffingwell?"

"There is no doubt now, sir."

"That she took her own life?"

"Yes, sir."

"You see that she refers to some one in that letter, and yet calls no name?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know to whom reference is made?"

"I do, sir."

"Will you tell me?"

"It is my duty to do so, sir."

"Who, then, is it of whom she speaks?"

"It is of me, sir."

"Ah! you confess it?"

"I must do so in duty to her, to myself and to you, Mr. Carroll."

"And she speaks of an act done, a secret?"

"Yes, sir."

"You know what that secret is, what act she had done that drove her to take her own life?"

"I do, Mr. Carroll."

"Leo Leffingwell, I am ready to hear from your lips the truth, tear my heart as it may with greater grief, my name, if so it be, with shame."

"Tell me what that secret is which drove my poor child to take her own life, for you tell me that you know?"

"I do, Mr. Carroll, and I will tell you the whole truth of the secret that has taken her from us who loved her so," and the strong man seemed deeply moved as he gazed upon the grief-stamped face of Samuel Carroll.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SECRET.

THE manner of Leo Leffingwell seemed to convince Mr. Carroll that he was to hear something of deep and serious import about his daughter.

The man's face had become pale, and he looked anxious now, and a trifle nervous, under the steady gaze of the father of the dead girl.

But he shook off all nervousness by an effort, and said:

"To tell you this secret, which caused your daughter to end her life, Mr. Carroll, I must go back some years, and tell you a page of my own life."

"Some years ago, while traveling on the frontier, I stopped one night at the home of a well-to-do settler, who had a daughter of eighteen.

"She was a lovely girl, and had been educated at a school in the East, up to her sixteenth

year, when her mother died, and she went to her frontier home to keep house for her father.

"The next morning I started upon my way, but had gone but a short distance when I heard hoofs coming on my trail, and turning beheld this girl.

"She at once told me how she had overheard a plot of her father's cowboys to kill and rob me, and I was to be ambushed a short distance ahead of where I then was.

"While we were talking about the best trail for me to take, the cowboys, three in number, came in sight, and suspecting that I knew their intention opened fire upon me.

"It was a hot fight, and two of them I killed, the third running away.

"But I was seriously wounded myself, and would have bled to death but for that young girl.

"She carried me back to her home, and through the weeks that I hovered between life and death nursed me most tenderly.

"But for her I would have died.

"When at last I was able to go my way I could not be blind to the fact that she loved me.

"Three months after I got a letter calling me to her as her father was dying.

"I went, and the dying man, supposing that I must love his daughter, placed her hand in mine and bade me vow to make her my wife.

"I could not refuse his dying request, I loved no one else and so I promised.

"We were married and I took her to my home and she made me a good and loving wife.

"But less than one year ago, when called East, I met your daughter.

"I saw her in the dining-room of the hotel in St. Louis and felt that she was the woman I alone could love.

"I returned to my hotel late that night to find it on fire, rushed to the room I had seen you enter and you know the rest.

"I tried to act honorably and stay away, and you came to me and I could not resist your invitation.

"I went to the lake-shore in the summer determined to tell your daughter all.

"I lingered day after day before I could do so, and when I did tell her that I was a married man I could not resist telling her that I loved her alone.

"Then she frankly confessed her love for me, and I needed little urging not to go away from her, to still remain near her.

"At last you were expected from abroad, and I escorted her home and left her.

"I went to my home to find my wife dying, for she had been thrown from her horse and fatally hurt.

"She had had them telegraph for me to various places for me to come to her.

"I arrived in time to receive her farewell, and to hear her words:

"Leo, I never was the love of your life.

"When I am gone, seek that other love and be happy."

"Poor child," murmured Samuel Carroll.

"Yes, for she was little more than a child, sir, and a noble, true little woman.

"It was after her funeral that a cowboy came with the mail, and then, by a strange coincidence I learned that the one I did love, your daughter, had died soon after my wife's death.

"What my grief was you can well know, Mr. Carroll.

"At once I started here to see you, but a telegram received at the railway station called me to the bedside of my mother who was living in Omaha.

"I could not, to stop over, refuse such a call, much as I longed to meet you and learn the whole truth about my lost Clarice.

"I went to Omaha at once, to the side of my mother, and found her dying.

"It was another cruel, bitter blow, Mr. Carroll, for the wife I had been deeply attached to was gone, the woman I idolized had died by her own hand, it was said, and my mother was dying.

"I confess that we had been estranged for years, for she had married a second time, and a wild, perhaps willful boy, my step-father had driven me from his home.

"But I made my way in life, and later on had written my mother of my success.

"She replied with all a mother's devotion for her son, but her husband refused to allow her to correspond with me and only when she was dying was she permitted to send for me."

"A cruel, bad man I should say he was, to part mother and son," Mr. Carroll said.

"Yes, sir, that is just what he was."

"But I arrived in time to find her alive, and to hear from her lips a strange story which you shall hear, Mr. Carroll, as it is my duty to tell it to you."

"I shall be glad to hear all you wish to tell me, Mr. Leffingwell, and you have my deepest sympathy in what, I know now, you have suffered—a triple affliction, for I feel that you dearly loved my little girl."

"With all my heart and soul I loved her, sir."

"I feel that you did; but tell me now, was it because you were married and her love was hopeless that she took her own life?"

"Yes, Mr. Carroll, that was the secret of her life, for hers was a nature to love but once, and with no hope that I could honorably return her affection, she became wretched, and ended her own life as she did, and the thought is enough to madden me, when I feel that she whom I loved, and who so loved me, lies in her grave, placed there by her own hand from a lost love which now I know was impossible, as I will explain to you, for our sorrows must be shared together," and the strong man buried his face in his hands and his whole form quivered with emotion.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MILLIONAIRE'S STORY.

WHEN Samuel Carroll had expected to feel anger against Leo Leffingwell, he found himself full of the deepest sympathy for him, and became the one to console.

He could see in the marriage with the rancher's daughter but an act of gratitude for her kind care of him, and when Leo Leffingwell had afterward met and loved his daughter Clarice he could not, as her father, knowing all that she was, condemn him.

Then too he had confessed to Clarice his being a married man, told her his story, even though he had also made known his love for her.

That she had loved him, the preserver of her life, he did not wonder, when he gazed upon the splendid looking fellow.

That she had loved him in spite of his being bound by a sacred tie to another, was a thing she alone could judge herself for.

How she had judged herself, how she had suffered, and suffering had taken her own life, was proven by that very suicidal act in driving the knife into her heart.

"My good young friend, I feel that we are companions in sorrow, that we are bound together now by mutual grief, and you have my sympathy as I know that I have yours.

"I acted as I believed for the best, advised by a friend in whom I trust, when I kept that letter from the public eye.

"It hinted at a secret which I now understand, but which the world would have taken a cruel view of, and so it was not spoken of."

"Do others than yourself know of this letter, for I believe you hinted as much, sir?"

"My dear friend, Wheatley."

"No other?"

"Crumbs, my butler."

"And no one else?"

"None, except that I have now told you."

"And Wheatley?"

"Is as true as steel."

"And Crumbs?"

"Is equally so."

"I am glad of this, for that secret could never be explained to the public that she simply loved a married man."

"Yes, it is better so."

"So I think."

"Now, Mr. Carroll, I have for you a surprise, and what may also give you pain."

"Ah! what more can be said of my child," groaned the unhappy man.

"It is not of our lost Clarice that I would speak, sir."

"Indeed?"

"It is of one other."

"I am ready to hear all that you may have to say, Mr. Leffingwell."

"I wish first to ask you, sir, if you were twice married?"

The millionaire started, his face became a shade paler, then flushed as he said.

"Is this necessary to know?"

"It is, sir."

"I will trust you, Mr. Leffingwell, and tell you frankly that I was married twice."

"And your wife, sir?"

"Is dead."

"May I ask what reason you have for believing her dead?"

"I'll tell you my story, sir, if you will bear with me."

"I will be only too glad to hear what you have to say, sir."

"I met and loved a young girl, in my earlier years, who I believed returned my affection."

"At least when I asked her to become my wife she consented and we were married."

"She soon after our marriage insisted upon going to New York to live, and I told her that I could ill afford it, that I was a poor man, but with prospects of becoming rich."

"Then the truth came out that her parents had led her to believe I was the owner of the Gilt-Edge Mine, when in reality it was owned by one who had the same name identically with myself."

"I soon saw that, disappointed in my not being a very rich man, my wife began to show the cloven foot, for she deliberately told me that she had never loved me, but instead loved another who was richer than I was."

"Soon after the birth of our child, a little boy, I was called away from home for some weeks, and upon my return found my wife had gone."

"She told me in a letter left for me that our little boy, only a few weeks old, had died, and that having nothing in common with myself she had gone forth in the world to seek her fortune."

"She had taken with her all she had in the house, along with several thousand dollars in money, and said that I would search in vain for her."

"I did search diligently for a year, or more, while my only comfort in life was in visiting the tiny grave of my little boy."

"I could never find her, and so at last I began action for a divorce which was granted me."

"I prospered in business however, accumulated money, and one day, when I felt that I was a rich man, I went to San Francisco to live."

"There I saw in the papers that a person of my wife's name had been killed in an accident upon the railroad some time before."

"Some years after I met and married a young girl who made me a true wife, but alas, it was the same old story, for she had loved another, and believing him to be dead, had married me."

"That lady was the mother of Clarice, and it was when, as I believed, happiness was in store for us all, that this supposed dead lover turned up, and my wife, with the same sense of honor that my poor daughter exhibited, took her own life, rather than love one man and be bound to another."

"I was heart-broken over my affliction, Mr. Leffingwell, but, determined to live for my daughter, I came to Chicago and entered into business in which I continued to prosper until I retired several years ago a very wealthy man."

"Now, sir, you have the story of my life."

CHAPTER XIII.

A WOMAN'S CONFESSION.

LEO LEFFINGWELL had listened with rapt attention to the story told by the millionaire of his past life.

At last he said, when he had heard all:

"Let me ask you if your first wife's maiden name was Beatrice Field?"

"Ah! do you know this?"

"That was her name, sir."

"You were married in St. Louis, May 1st, 18—."

"You are well posted, Mr. Leffingwell."

"Your son was born just one year after, to the day."

"He was."

"And died when five weeks old?"

"Yes."

"And was buried in the village near your home?"

"He was."

"Your wife was killed, as you said, upon the Erie Railroad, in an accident in which many lives were lost?"

"Yes."

"Now, Mr. Leffingwell, I wish to tell you that, though reported among those killed, your wife recovered from the severe injuries she received in that accident."

"Do you know this, Leffingwell?" asked Mr. Carroll, with deep emotion.

"I do, sir."

"She yet lives then?"

"No, she died only a few days ago."

"Poor woman."

"She had married a second time."

"Indeed?"

"She married her early lover."

"Ah! and where did she go after leaving me?"

"She became a teacher and supported herself and child."

"Her child?"

"Yes, sir."

"What do you mean?"

"She deceived you, sir."

"How?"

"Her boy did not die, as she asserted."

"My God! our child did not die?"

"No, sir, it was very ill, and a nurse was paid to carry it away, while a doll was dressed, and placed in a coffin, to represent the dead infant, and that was what was buried in the grave which you mourned over."

"Oh! the wickedness of that poor woman who once was my wife," cried Mr. Carroll.

"It was a very sad and sinful act to be guilty of, sir, but it was all true."

"How do you know this, Mr. Leffingwell?"

"From the woman's own lips, sir."

"That is proof."

"But you say she is dead?"

"Yes, sir."

"Died a few days ago?"

"She did, sir."

"Poor, sinful woman."

"She is dead, sir, so peace to her ashes."

"Yes, I can only say to that, Amen."

"She is buried in Omaha, sir."

"And being dead can be forgiven, so I will send and have her grave properly marked."

"That is kind of you, Mr. Carroll, but it has already been done."

"And by whom?"

"Her son."

"Ah! and my son, if he yet lives."

"He yet lives, sir."

"You are sure of this?"

"I am, sir."

"Thank Heaven for this, but with such a mother what can the son be?"

"Would you wish to see him, sir?"

"If he is poor and in distress I would be glad to aid him, even if he has gone wrong in life."

"But if he has made a man of himself, if he has risen above temptation and has proven himself worthy of my affection, even if he were ever so needy, I would gladly welcome him to my home and my heart."

"You are a noble man, Mr. Carroll, and I will not have to plead for your son."

"You knew his mother, you said?"

"As I did my own mother, sir."

"And her boy, my boy?"

"A man now, sir, for it was many years ago since his mother deserted, yes, that is the word, deserted you."

"Yes, he is a man now."

"And you know him?"

"As I do myself, sir."

"Mr. Leffingwell, I have lost my last anchor in life, my child, my beautiful Clarice; but if you can bring to me my son, to let him cheer me in my declining, rapidly flying years, I will forever bless you."

"I will do so, sir, in fact I have done so."

"I am Leo Carroll, your son."

Words can never describe the feelings of the father at thus meeting his son, whose supposed grave he had mourned over in the long ago.

He was almost completely overwhelmed, and it was a long while before he could command himself sufficient to speak.

"My son, in you I find one I am proud of, one to respect and regard with love and admiration."

"But tell me about your mother, my son?" and the old man dwelt tenderly upon the last two words.

"Hers was not a happy life, sir, for she felt that she had done wrong in leaving you as she did."

"But she worked hard to support herself and give to me a good education, and she did."

"At last again she met her early lover, the man whom she had always loved, and as she knew of your having gotten a divorce from her they were married."

"The man's name was Leffingwell, and I was forced to take his name."

"But he hated me from the first, and at last his treatment of me became such that I was forced to run away from home."

"But still I kept my mother in remembrance, and after his death I went to see her."

"Then she was taken ill and I went to her side, and then only learned the sad story of her life."

"Then only I learned who I was, and that I was your son, the half brother of Clarice."

"Oh, that I had known this before, for then she would have been alive, and I would have been more than happy in having such a sister."

"Seeing by the papers that she had taken her own life I hastened to you as soon as I could, though I should have remained to settle up my

poor mother's affairs, as she left some property which comes to me now."

"You will never need it, never, for I am a millionaire, Leo, and you are my only son and heir, yes, all I have left in the world now, and all I have is yours."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HEIR TO MILLIONS.

THERE were rumors and rumors floating about the town.

First it was said that Mr. Carroll had adopted Leo Leffingwell, who, had Clarice lived, would have become his son-in-law.

Then came the story that Leo Leffingwell had been secretly married, and the man was in reality the son-in-law of the millionaire.

Next was a rumor that was more startling, for it had leaked out in some way that Clarice had left a letter giving her reasons for her suicide.

These reasons were that in Leo Leffingwell she had discovered a half-brother, a son by her father's first marriage, and the thought of having fallen in love with one thus connected by kindred ties, though innocent upon her part and his, had so weighed upon her mind that she had taken her own life.

It was also whispered about that Leo Leffingwell was married, and this discovery had affected Clarice to such an extent that she had committed suicide.

As a proof that the man was his son, Mr. Carroll had presented him as such, and by the name of Leo Carroll.

He had also let it be known that Leo Carroll was his heir, and whatever might have been thought about the stranger before, with such a backing he was regarded with the highest esteem, and treated with marked consideration.

As a proof of the regard felt for him, he was at once invited to join the Swelldom Club, and so drifted into other clubs, the Sportsman's, Fisticuff, and the Canvas and Crayon, for Leo Carroll was considerable of an artist, it was discovered.

He sung well, too, and though avoiding being dragged into a church choir, was made a member of the Classical Music Club.

It seemed that all these honors were forced upon him, for he had remained much at home, only going out for a drive with his father on pleasant afternoons, and until months had passed after the tragic death of Clarice, never appearing at the opera or in society.

Mr. Carroll was glad to see his son so much sought after, and said:

"It will not do to have a shadow always upon our house, Leo, so let the sunlight in and enjoy life, as you have the means to do."

"Yes, let the clouds roll by and make life worth the living."

Leo Carroll had gone West to sell out his interests in his ranch, had stopped at Omaha to erect a monument over his mother's grave, and to settle up her belongings, and though his father had urged upon him to draw upon him for money, had never found it necessary to do so.

With the coming of another spring, however, Leo Carroll felt that he could enjoy himself, so he visited the opera, attended the club, drove his splendid team upon the Boulevard, gave dinners and suppers, and at last ordered a yacht built, which was to outclass all others upon the lakes, and be a thing of beauty and luxury as well.

His father was delighted when Leo's dogs took the prizes at the show, his horses won the purses at the fairs and on the course, and his yacht led the fleet in all the races.

The old gentleman was lavish in his gifts of money to his son, always saying:

"It is for you, all of it, Leo, and you cannot even spend your income."

But through all Leo Carroll was ever a dutiful son, and he devoted himself to his father at all times, always thinking of his comfort and pleasure.

He was not a drinking man, other than to enjoy his wine at meals, never played cards for money, did not seem extravagant beyond certain luxuries and enjoyments, and was liked by every one.

The best "catch" in Chicago, he was sought after by fond mothers, while lovely girls who would like to be mistress of such a home as was the Carrolls', fairly threw themselves at his feet.

A tinge of romance hung over him, of mystery too, for the rumors of his being a married man he had never seen fit to contradict.

Society adored him, the members of the clubs

to which he belonged voted him A No. 1 as a man, and one and all sung his praises.

The track people spoke of him as a first-class driver and rider, and one who knew a horse from hoofs to ear-tips.

The yachtsmen said he was the best amateur sailor upon the lakes, and the *bon vivants* asserted that he could give the best dinners and suppers of any one of their acquaintance.

When he went to the opera or theater he was the cynosure of every eye, and elderly ladies and gentlemen vowed that such a son as was Leo Carroll was a joy forever.

He had made some improvements in the house, for the library wing, where Clarice had taken her life, and above which were her rooms, had been torn away and another addition put on which had been made into an art gallery, and another wing had been turned into a library.

Out in the cemetery a massive column of marble had been reared over the grave of the beautiful suicide, and upon a tablet of bronze was simply her name, age and date of her death.

In the mansion, as the old servants about brought to the mind constantly of Mr. Carroll the memory of his dead daughter, Leo had sent them away and secured others, while the household furniture had all been changed for a like reason.

The health of the millionaire had also begun to fail again, as in the time when he had gone South with Clarice, and many said that it would not be very long before Samuel Carroll would be laid in the cemetery beside his loved daughter, for though he dearly loved his devoted son, his idol in life had been the beautiful suicide.

But to those who spoke to Leo Carroll about his father's failing health he would say: "Father has not been very strong for years, but he is in no danger and will live to a ripe old age."

CHAPTER XV.

DICK DOOM IN CHICAGO.

"YOU are Mr. Richard Doom, detective, I believe?"

So asked the chief of police of Chicago, addressing a young man who stood before him, and who had just been admitted to his presence.

"No, sir, my name is Dick Doom, and I am a human ferret," was the answer.

The chief of police looked at the young man with renewed interest.

He took him in from head to feet.

He saw a man of medium height, slender form, and a well-knit frame, and a face that was a study for an artist.

He was neatly dressed, had an air of being in good circumstances and spoke like one who had perfect confidence in himself.

"I have heard of you, Mr. Dick Doom, and I sent to my friend the New York chief, to recommend a man to me whom I could put upon a most dangerous and intricate piece of detective work, and he spoke of you, gave me your address and hence I wrote you.

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Doom, so sit down and we will have a talk together."

The detective did as he was requested and the chief went on:

"When did you arrive in our city?"

"An hour ago, sir."

"Have you put up, yet?"

"Yes sir, at the Grand Pacific."

"That is rather expensive, is it not?"

"Yes, sir, but I always stop at the best hotels, for there I have a better chance to study human nature."

"Very true."

"You are just from the West I believe?"

"From Denver, sir."

"Do you know Chicago?"

"To a limited extent, sir; but it does not take me very long to learn a city or its people."

"I have heard of you as a very remarkable man, Mr. Doom."

"Thank you, sir."

"The New York chief was here some months ago and we talked of you, and he told me, if I ever needed a man to ferret out a case that baffled others to send for you.

"I have just such a case on hand, and so I wrote him for your address, and I am glad that I was so fortunate as to secure your services."

"Thank you, sir; but I was about to come to Chicago, when I received your letter."

"Indeed, and on Secret Service business?"

"Yes, sir, for I have a prisoner for you, one who left your city a week ago and who walked into a trap I set for him in Denver."

"Ah! this is interesting."

"May I ask what he has been guilty of?"

"Counterfeiting United States money, sir."

"The very business I wished to set you upon was to find a band of counterfeiters who are spreading a great deal of the queer here in Chicago."

"If it is Domino Dick you wish, he is the man I have with me."

The chief sprung to his feet with an exclamation of pleased surprise while he cried:

"That is the very man, Domino Dick, Sporting Sam, Spartan Saul, Captain Cosmos and by half a dozen names is he known."

"He shoved the queer while dealing faro in a large gambling-house here, the miners not being over-particular about the money they got, but giving up good bills for it without knowing it."

"He did the same thing on the race tracks, and then in selling tickets for a grand prize fight where thousands were taken in and the change was all in the queer."

"He got up excursions on the lakes and roped in another harvest of good money, and handed out the bad."

"Then my men lost him, after tracking him thus far, through the names and places I have mentioned."

"But counterfeit money still came into circulation, and the whole of my force could not detect any one man who passed it, except a cattleman now and then who did it innocently, having been imposed on himself."

Dick Doom laughed.

"You seem amused?"

"Yes, sir, for it was your innocent cattleman who were the passers of counterfeit money."

"What?"

"Fact, sir."

"Have you proof of this?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"And will give it to me?"

"Certainly, for that is what I am here for."

"I shall be glad to hear all that you have to tell, Mr. Doom."

"Well, chief, your man, when closely watched as sport, ticket seller and steamboat excursionist, turned preacher."

"Ah!"

"He began to do the stock yards, go to the places where the cattlemen put up, and picking out his men made them the shovels of the queer each time he wished them to get off a lot of it."

"And he was here in Chicago making it all the time?"

"He was here in Chicago until called away by a decoy letter I sent to him."

"Here he was known as Parson Paul—"

"Hah! a man I have often had reported to me as a good preacher who was doing much good in the stock yards and among the slums."

"That is your man, for he is a good preacher, but a very bad man."

"He has Bible quotations at the tip of his tongue, is eloquent, sings well and draws a crowd about him, often doing good, but generally picking his men for his work of wickedness, and he never fails in reading his man, never makes a mistake."

"You amaze me!"

"I was working up the retreat of a band of counterfeiters in Colorado, and I found that they never passed a dollar of the money there, that it was all sent from Denver to Chicago."

"I discovered that each week a package left the Express Office in Denver marked *samples* and valued at a high figure."

"These packages were addressed to:

DOCTOR PAUL MATTHEWS,

U. S. ASSAYER,

No. — West Adams st. Chicago, Ill.

"I came on to Chicago and discovered that the Government had no such assayer, and that a Parson Paul made his home at the number named.

"There was a woman there, whom I asked about getting rooms, and I recognized her as one I had seen in Denver several times.

"She had no rooms to let, and watching I saw Parson Paul come in.

"I had seen him too in Denver.

"So I returned to Denver, and went to the stable where the woman and the man, whom I had met there, hired a team to go into the country with.

"The driver told me he had left them at a certain ranch.

"I procured a horse and stopped at the ranch all night, and the woman I saw there was strangely like the one I had seen in Chicago, and I told her I knew a lady who was the image of her."

"She said she had a twin sister there, and

then I told her that I lived on West Adams street and had seen her there.

"She said that was where her sister lived, and I knew I was on the right track.

"There were two cowboys on the ranch, but I knew that their business was not punching cows, except as a blind, and so I determined to keep an eye on the Express Office.

"I got a room near, and two days after up came the woman and one of the cowboys, and they sent off a package for Doctor Paul Matthews.

"I then went in, told the agent who I was, imitated the writing on the package, and writing a note with a blue pencil on Express paper said:

"Come at once to ranch for it is necessary—Just time for mail. Yours, DOLPH."

"That was the name one of the cowboys had been called by.

"Four days after Doctor Paul Matthews got off the train at Denver and I was there to receive him."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GOLDEN FETTERS.

"WELL, Mr. Doom, I see that the New York chief sent me the right man in you, for you have tracked down the counterfeiters which all my force failed to do," said the Chicago chief, who had listened to the story of Dick Doom with the deepest interest.

"I will tell you, sir, the rest of my story if you wish."

"By all means, for it is as entertaining as a novel."

"I met the pretended parson at the depot, told him I was a new man on the ranch and Dolph had sent me to meet him and bring him to the hotel, for there was some trouble which I could not explain, but Dolph would.

"He walked into my web as innocently as a fly, and once in my room at the hotel I covered him with my revolver, and slipped my gold hand-fetters upon him."

"Your gold handcuffs, sir?"

"Yes, sir, for I have a pair of solid gold fetters, warranted to fit any wrist."

"I would like to see them, Mr. Doom."

"You will, shortly, sir, for Parson Paul is occupying them just now."

"Indeed!"

"But where is he?"

"I left him in the keeping of your officers, sir."

"What a strange conceit to use a pair of golden fetters."

"Yes, sir, I suppose it is; but I have queer conceits, and to manacle my prisoners with golden fetters was one of them."

"I then sent for an officer, to guard my man while I went out to the ranch."

"I took these officers with me in a carriage, pretended we had broken down, and asked for shelter at the ranch.

"I was in disguise, as were the detective officers with me, two of them being dressed as women."

"We were made welcome, and I saw Dolph and the other man there, besides the woman."

"That night we watched, and at one o'clock we entered a secret room up-stairs, to find the three of them at work making counterfeit money, the two men being the engravers and printers."

"A magnificent capture, indeed, Mr. Doom."

"So we thought, sir, and we carried our prisoners back to Denver that night, jailed them, and left two officers in charge of the ranch."

"The plates, press and paper I turned over to the Denver chief of police, with the woman and the two men, while I started to Chicago with the Parson, having just received your letter."

"Splendid!" said the chief.

"Yes, sir, the counterfeits were splendid work, for the paper used even had the silk thread through it that the genuine has."

"And your man is here?"

"Yes, sir, for I did not see fit to disturb the Denver authorities about requisition papers, and so brought him with me in a quiet way."

"I put up at the Grand Pacific, then called a carriage, and drove here to see you."

"But, there is work yet to be done."

"And what is that, Mr. Doom?"

"To visit the Parson's quarters at once, upon West Adams street, arrest the woman there, and search the place for all that may be evidence against the man."

"I will go with you, if you wish."

"With pleasure, chief; but now I will bring in my man."

"With the Golden Fetters," said the chief, with a smile.

"Yes, sir."

Going to the door Dick Doom called to some one outside, and an officer approached with a prisoner.

This prisoner was dressed in black, with high silk hat and might be taken for a physician or a clergyman.

He had a bright, intelligent face, with a kindly expression, but was now pale and nervous.

The prisoner's hands were clasped together, and upon the wrists were a pair of solid gold fetters, as the chief saw when Dick Doom led him toward him.

"Chief, allow me to present Doctor Paul Matthews, alias Domino Dick, alias Sporting Sam, alias Spartan Saul, alias Captain Cosmos, alias Parson Paul," said Dick Doom, in his quiet way, while the chief replied:

"Doctor Matthews, I am most happy to meet you I am sure."

"I don't doubt it, chief, but I gave your crew the slip, and but for this slick ferret who is so toney that he uses golden fetters, you'd never have set your grip on me."

"I will not contradict you, doctor, for you say what is so, and Mr. Doom deserves the greater credit for catching you."

"He got the whole outfit, me included."

"No, not all," averred Dick Doom.

"Yes, you have."

"I say no, doctor."

"I'd like to know what more, and who else you want?"

"I want more yet."

"You want the earth, I guess."

"I want Mrs. Matthews, doctor."

The counterfeiter started and turned a shade whiter at this; but he recovered his assurance quickly, and with a laugh answered:

"You cannot get what is not, my friend."

"Well, I can try."

"Come, chief, are you ready for that drive with me to No. — West Adams street?"

The counterfeiter uttered a cry like a tiger at bay, and raised his manacled hands as though to spring upon the young ferret; but, there was a look on the face of Dick Doom which checked his intention, and dropping into a chair he groaned:

"My God! I am utterly ruined."

"You should think of wreck before you set sail in dangerous waters, doctor," reminded Dick Doom, and at a sign from him the chief called in a couple of officers whom he told to lead the prisoner away to a cell.

"One moment, please, for I will need my Golden Fetters, chief, elsewhere," and Dick Doom unlocked the prisoner's manacles and placed them in his pocket, while steel handcuffs were slipped upon the wrists of the counterfeiter in their stead.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MAN WITH AN OPINION.

THE place on West Adams street was reached, and Dick Doom rung the bell and with the chief awaited response.

The door was opened by the same woman whom Dick Doom had before seen there and he asked innocently:

"Is Doctor Paul Matthews at home, madam?"

"He is not."

The reply was rather curtly given.

"Is Parson Paul at home then?"

"No."

"I'll leave a line for him then," and the Ferret of the Golden Fetters entered the door, followed by the chief, who closed it after him.

The woman looked surprised.

"Is Domino Dick at home madam?"

The woman started, changed color and replied:

"I do not know whom you mean."

"Or Spartan Saul, Sporting Sam, or—

"What do you mean, sir, by coming here?"

"I mean, madam, to arrest you, that is all."

"Arrest me?"

"So I said."

"And for what?"

"As the accomplice of Parson Paul."

"He boards here and I know nothing about him."

No more than you do of Mr. and Mrs. Brainard and Dolph Bedford of the ranch near Denver."

"I do not understand you."

"Then I will make myself more plainly understood."

"I am Dick Doom, detective, and I arrest you as the accomplice of a counterfeiting band."

"Now you comprehend me, do you not?"

The woman uttered a cry and sunk down upon

the stairs, while the chief stepped to the door and made a signal which brought two detectives to the house.

"Guard this woman," said Dick Doom, who seemed to be the leader, and with the chief he went up-stairs.

The two were gone for half an hour and upon their return the ferret said:

"We have found enough evidence of your guilt, madam, to condemn a dozen women."

"You will go with us, for these officers will be left in charge of your house."

"Get ready, please, for a stay in prison."

The woman moaned, pleaded, and then became calm.

Robing herself for the street, and taking with her a small sachet, she accompanied the chief and the ferret to the carriage in waiting and was driven to the prison.

"Well, Mr. Doom, that was the quickest and slickest haul I ever knew."

"It will pay you five thousand dollars, for that is the reward offered for the capture of the counterfeiters."

"Thank you, sir; but I will only take half of it, so please divide the other among the needy of the force."

"You are most generous, sir, and your kindness will be appreciated."

"I hope we can keep you with us in Chicago, for we need just such a man as you are to give us new life."

"I will remain for a while at least, sir, for I am interested in a most remarkable case I have been reading that happened in your city."

"Indeed, and what case is that?"

"I happened to come upon a roll of old papers in the hotel in Denver, they having evidently been left there by the former occupant of the room."

"Observing a blue pencil mark upon one I glanced at it and became interested in what I read."

"All the other papers were marked, and the more I read the more deeply I became absorbed in what I considered a most remarkable case."

"I do not know to what case you allude, Mr. Doom?"

"To the murder of Miss Clarice Carroll."

"Ah! but that was no murder."

"Indeed?"

"No."

"What then?"

"A case of suicide."

"Who said so?"

"Why there was no thought of murder in the case."

"A young girl, eh?"

"Yes."

"Very beautiful."

"She was."

"Rich."

"Immensely."

"And she took her own life without cause?"

"Well, it was hinted that she had cause."

"Chief, I read the papers I alluded to, and then sent money and got a man to forward me every clipping bearing upon the case."

"I even got the very latest news in that quarter, and I put all the clippings in a scrap-book and studied them as I would a lesson in algebra."

"Well?"

"The more I studied the more I became convinced that the girl did not commit suicide, that it was a case of diabolical murder."

"Why, Doom, you astound me, for no one has ever taken that view before."

"You are mistaken, sir, for some of my clippings hint that a burglar did the deed, though there was no property taken."

"Yes, but that was a random shot to try and get at the bottom facts."

"Still I will stake my reputation as a ferret that it was a case of murder."

"But the motive?"

"That is to be discovered."

"There was not a thing taken, either of jewelry or money, for I was up at the Carroll house the morning after the discovery."

"Then robbery was not the motive."

"Why, the young lady killed herself with a jewel-hilted stiletto she had purchased herself in Italy, and the blade was found sticking in her bosom, while she lay back dead in a chair."

"She was an only child?"

"Well, there was a son by a former marriage who afterward appeared upon the scene."

"So I read."

"Yes, and he is the joy of his old father's life."

"Do you know him?"

"Mr. Carroll or his son?"

"Both."

"Yes, and I respect the son as I do the father, for he is a noble fellow."

"Well, chief, I am here in Chicago for game, and I tell you in confidence that my belief is that Miss Clarice Carroll was murdered, and I intend to find the murderer," said Dick Doom in a manner that could not but impress the chief of police.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FERRET STARTS ON A TRAIL.

THERE was no doubt of the guilt of Parson Paul and his clique of counterfeiters, for there were proofs and proofs found to condemn them.

The trial followed quickly in the United States Court, of Parson Paul, the two women and the two cowboys, as they called themselves.

Their conviction followed almost as quickly, and Dick Doom was paid his reward, which he at once shared with the needy on the police and detective force, an act which gained him many friends.

This accomplished the young Ferret of the Golden Fetter said to the chief one day:

"I begin work to-morrow."

"On what?"

"The Clarice Carroll murder case."

The chief laughed.

"You will still believe it to be a suicide?"

"In the light of the facts, yes."

"Well, I only ask you to speak to no one of my suspicion but to watch developments and lend me aid when I need it."

"I will gladly do so."

"You see my badges?" and the young ferret opened his coat and revealed a number of gold and gem-studded badges.

There was a diamond star with an eye in the center, a skull and cross-bones, a pair of golden manacles, a shield and several others of more or less value.

"Now if I show you the Golden Fetter, no matter what my disguise may be, you will know who I am."

"Yes, but you have a fortune there in badges."

"They are valuable I admit."

"And more, they will give me absolute power in New York, Boston, New Orleans and on the Mississippi River."

"But I wish one from you that will give me full power here to command aid if I need it."

"You shall have it and welcome," and the chief opened a drawer taking out a shield of gold on which was engraven:

OBEY.

"Pin this on, Doom, and you will not want for aid if you show it to any police officer or man of the Secret Service of Chicago."

"I thank you, sir."

"But now let me ask you for any information you may have of this Clarice Carroll murder?"

"I have here the full official reports, which you may read at your leisure, but I am sure that you are taking a great deal of trouble for nothing."

"Somehow I feel that I am not, and I am like a bloodhound, once I strike a trail."

"So I have heard; but what a pity the man you tracked so long and caught in Boston playing the French count, escaped you by leaping into the sea with his irons on, thus cheating the gallows."

"I read the whole affair with a great deal of interest."

"Now do you know, chief, I do not believe that man is dead."

"What?"

"I cannot believe it."

"The steamer was at sea?"

"Yes."

"How far off the coast?"

"Perhaps a couple of leagues."

"At night?"

"Yes."

"The man was in irons?"

"Yes."

"Hand and foot?"

"Yes; with an eighteen inch chain from foot to foot."

"Any other?"

"Yes, a chain ran from the ankles to the one that connected his feet."

"How much weight, say?"

"Fifteen pounds."

"How far apart could he get his hands?"

"Six inches."

"Then that man went to the bottom of the sea like a rock."

"I cannot believe it?"

"How could he escape?"

"That question I cannot answer, but yet I

somehow can never bring myself to feel that he escaped the gallows."

"The fate he met with was bad enough."

"Yes, but hanging would be worse."

"But I must be going, and I thank you for your courtesy, chief."

"Do not mention it."

"But I'll tell you what I'll do?"

"Well?"

"We have a city fund here of one thousand dollars to be paid to any one who discovers any criminal whom the law is anxious to get its clutches upon."

"Yes, sir."

"I will turn that over to you if you prove that Miss Clarice Carroll was not a suicide."

"It's a bargain, chief, and if I fail I'll give you and your captains the finest supper Kingsley can set for us."

"Done!"

"Now go in to win your money or lose your supper."

"I'm in the game to win," was the reply of the human ferret as he left the chief's office.

He went at once to Hyde Park and was soon strolling along in front of the handsome grounds of the Carroll mansion.

"I am a creature of strange imaginings and presentiments, and somehow I cannot but believe that young lady was murdered, so I will at once set to work to unravel the tangled skein," he muttered to himself as he went along slowly, gazing at the grounds and mansion.

A gardener was working near and to him he called:

"Whose handsome place is this, please?"

"Mr. Samuel Carroll's, sir."

"You have beautiful grounds."

"Yes, sir, I am the gardener."

"Indeed, then you are just the man I wish to talk to, and here is a dollar for you, so that you may not lose your time."

"Thank you, sir, what can I do for you?"

"Well, I am curious to know all you can tell me about this place, for now you mention the name I recall that there was the murder of a young lady here."

"Yes, sir, the young lady of the house; but it was not a murder."

"Ah, and what then?"

"She committed suicide."

"Indeed! but why?"

"Well, sir, I was not here then; but I have heard it talked over in the servants' hall, and it was said she loved a married man and so ended her life from disappointed love; but others said as how it proved to be her half-brother, and yet none of the servants really know, for there was not one of them here then."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir."

"All the servants then here were dismissed?"

"Yes, sir."

"By whom?"

"Well, the young master sent them away, I have heard, sir."

"Do you know any of them?"

"I know Crumbs the butler as he then was, sir."

"Well, I'd like to meet Crumbs, for I am fond of the weird tales, so I'll get you to give me his address, if you will."

The address was given, and as the ferret walked away some minutes after, he muttered to himself:

"So all of the old servants were dismissed, eh?"

CHAPTER XIX.

ON A STILL HUNT.

CRUMBS the butler had taken it to heart greatly at being dismissed from a home where he had held full sway for years.

He had had the run of the pantries, storeroom and wine closets, had done the marketing for the household, and in various ways had been able to turn an honest penny into his own pocket while he also was able to lay aside a bottle now and then for future reference.

The result was that Crumbs had very nearly paid for a little cottage home when his dismissal came and he was left in a quandary.

Mr. Wheatley had a butler, so he could not help him, and after having such an easy life at the Carroll mansion, Crumbs did not wish to fatigue himself with hard work.

So he had a talk with Jule, the maid of Clarice, and discovered that she had managed to save up just enough to furnish the little cottage, and make the last payment upon it, for her young mistress had been most liberal with her.

The result was that Crumbs and Jule united

their lives and fortunes, and went to live in the cottage.

Jule took in sewing; Crumbs did such little odds and ends as came his way, and thus the pot was kept boiling for a season.

But, Jule was taken sick, and Crumbs was in despair. He saw nothing for it but to go out to work and make a living, and was meditating moodily over this alternative, when a visitor called at the cottage.

"Mr. Crumbs, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Crumbs, I am a lawyer, looking up important claims to property, and it will be to your interest to help me, as I believe you can, for I pay liberally for valuable services."

Crumbs was amazed, for surely the lawyer had struck the wrong man.

But he asked:

"How can I help you, sir?"

"Well, I believe you can help me very much. It is a case of division and silence, for what you tell me is to be kept secret, and what I pay you don't brag about."

"I don't know anything to tell you, sir."

"We'll see. You were a butler in the Carroll family, I believe?"

"Yes, sir, for seven years."

"Mr. Carroll and his daughter comprised the family?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the servants?"

"There was the cook, sir, and kitchen-maid, the up-stairs girl, and Miss Clarice's maid, Jule, who is now my wife."

"Were those all?"

"No, sir, for there was the coachman, stable-boy and gardener."

"And you liked your place?"

"Yes, indeed, sir, and was sorry when the young master dismissed us all."

"Why did he do so?"

"Well, sir, he said as how the sight of us brought up sad memories to the old gentleman, and he wished us out of the way."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why did they not move away?"

"I don't know, sir; but the library where Miss Clarice killed herself, and over which was her room, were torn away, and a new wing built on."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who discovered Miss Carroll's murder?"

"Murder, sir?"

"Yes."

"It was no murder, sir."

"How do you know, Crumbs?"

"It was suicide."

"How do you know, Crumbs?"

"Well, sir, it was Jule who found her and fainted, and then I got there and she was lying back in the easy-chair before the fire, the knife sticking in her yet."

"Do you remember just how the knife pointed, from the right or left?"

"Well, sir, now I come to think of it, the hilt leant toward the left."

"How long was the blade?"

"Just nine inches, sir."

"Was it driven to the hilt?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the hands?"

"Were in the young lady's lap, sir."

"Clasped?"

"No, sir."

"How about the letter?"

"Do you know about that, sir?"

"Oh, yes, Crumbs; I know everything, and what I wish from you is all the information I can get, for a great deal depends upon it."

"Yes, sir."

"About the letter?"

"Well, sir, I gave it to the master, for it lay open upon the table and he and the doctor concluded not to let it be seen."

"You saw it?"

"Yes, sir; I've got it now."

"Indeed?"

"You see, the master gave it to Mr. Wheatley and he laid it away and forgot where it was, but J

"Oh, yes, sir, for when she was South she wrote all the letters to me about the place."

"I'll buy them from you, Crumbs."

"All right, sir."

"Perhaps I had better tell you, Crumbs, that I am trying to make out a case which will pay you considerable money if you can help me in it, so I'll just hand you over a couple of hundred dollars now as a token of good faith, and promise to reward you well when I have finished my work."

"I'll do all I can to help you, sir," said the delighted Crumbs.

Then he got a bundle of letters from the house, and handed them to Dick Doom, who asked:

"Crumbs, who let Miss Carroll in the night of the murder?"

"The suicide, you mean, sir?"

"Yes, if you so call it."

"I did, sir."

"Did you lock the door?"

"Yes, sir; but—"

"But what?"

"Well, sir, I'll tell you what I never told any one, and that is that there was a skeleton key in the pass lock, for I found it there the next morning. How it came there I do not know, sir; but it was there, and I took it out."

"What did you do with it?"

"I have it, sir."

"I want that key, Crumbs."

"You shall have it, sir."

And Crumbs got the key and handed it over just as Jule came out upon the piazza to see who it was that her husband was talking to.

CHAPTER XX.

FERRETING.

"THIS is my wife, Mister—Mister—" and Crumbs paused as he did not know his visitor's name.

"Leffingwell," said the ferret.

"Oh, that's the name of the brave gentleman who saved Miss Clarice from burning up in the hotel in St Louis, and who is now Mr. Carroll's adopted son," said Jule.

"Yes, I bear the same name, Mrs. Crumbs, and I am happy to meet you, for I came to get your aid and your husband's in trying to secure a fortune."

"I hope you can help me, for it will be greatly to your advantage I assure you, madam."

Jule was delighted with the handsome, polite young gentleman, and replied:

"I will be happy to help you, sir, I assure you."

"You are very kind, and I will tell you that it is a matter that must be kept a secret between us, or else I may lose all."

"To get the information I desire, I must go back to your life at Mr. Carroll's, for I wish you to tell me all you can about Mr. Carroll, Miss Clarice and the young lady's beaux, for I know that you were, I may say, her confidential friend as well as maid."

Jule was greatly flattered, and began to talk, and Crumbs helped her out until, after a visit of an hour the ferret took his departure with the remark to himself:

"I am more and more convinced that Miss Carroll was not a suicide, for that blow was not given, with the dagger to the hilt and hilt leaning to the left with the left hand, while the two hands were lying at rest in the lap."

"Then too that key in the door means something."

"Now to go to my room and study those letters written by her, and the one just before her death."

It was late when Dick Doom went to bed that night, for he had been looking over the letters for hours and seemed deeply interested in them.

The next morning he went to the office of a celebrated expert in chirography, and placed before him the letters, with paper pasted over them excepting certain lines being left to be read.

"I wish your opinion, sir, as to this handwriting," he said.

The expert took the letters, placed them under a strong light, and with his glass examined them in silence for a long while, the ferret closely watching him.

Then he took pen and paper and began to trace some of the lines.

"These letters were written with a gold pen, sir, and this one with a steel pen," he at last said.

"Yes."

"Of course the difference in pens would make a material difference in the writing."

"I understand."

"Now the copy of the handwriting of these letters is very clever."

"You think it is a copy then?"

"Of course."

"The same person did not write all that is written there before you?"

"By no means."

"Have you any other suggestion to make?"

"I would say, sir, that these lines here before me of two sentences, beginning with, 'I cannot tell you my secret,' and ending with 'That made a secret of it,' were written under intense excitement."

"You would call the writing a man's?"

"It is masculine hand, sir, in those letters, but a woman wrote them."

"And from this other letter from which you have just quoted?"

"A man made the copy."

"Thank you, and wrote under excitement?"

"Most certainly."

"Please say what I owe you, sir."

"Twenty dollars, please."

The money was handed over without a word. An expert is worthy of his pay, thought Dick Doom.

From that office the ferret returned to the hotel, took his grip and started for the depot, from which he took a train up the lake-shore.

He went to the hotel where Leo Leffingwell had stopped the summer before and remained there just two days.

While there he occupied the same rooms, rode and drove about and took solitary walks, at the same time talking a great deal to the landlord and servants.

Then he took the train back to the city and was once more installed in his room at the Grand Pacific.

That afternoon he obtained permission to visit the yacht owned by Leo Carroll, and a liberal fee to the mate in charge got him shown all over the pretty vessel.

He took great interest in the vessel, said that he was a sailor himself and returning to the hotel was busy some time in making notes in a book which he took from his trunk.

"Now, to find some one who can help me trace the career of this man Leo Carroll," he muttered.

"Mr. William Wheatley, Crumbs said, is Mr. Carroll's best friend, but for that very reason it might be dangerous to go to him."

"I must get at some one to help me reach the bottom facts, for I am just as sure that poor girl was murdered as I am that I am alive."

"Money was the object of course, and perhaps a knowledge of facts as they existed may have caused a larger stake to be played for than was originally intended."

"Let me see, the best thing to do is to trace old Mr. Carroll's career through his earlier years."

"Yes, I will do that first, for the other will keep."

He glanced over the time-table and said:

"Crumbs said that he had lived in California."

"I can catch the Express that goes at four."

Half an hour after Mr. Dick Doom was on his way to the Pacific Slope in a Pullman sleeper.

CHAPTER XXI.

A PAGE OF THE PAST.

THE trip of Dick Doom to San Francisco resulted in his tracing the career of Samuel Carroll there, finding out that his wife had committed suicide just as his daughter had done, it was alleged.

Here the ferret stopped to think, for he said to himself:

"This looks like the inheritance of madness."

"It is a black eye upon my theory of murder."

"What shall I do?"

"Give it up and admit that I am wrong?"

"No, I am just as firmly set as ever in my opinion that I am right."

"The same feelings that came over me when I read those papers about the affair, come over me now that I cannot shake off the belief that it was a murder."

"My friends, the chiefs, all say I am a born detective, for I intuitively take ideas, and maybe I am."

"But now what am I to do?"

"Ah! I have it!"

"I will seek the doctor who was called in to see Mrs. Carroll, for surely she had one, and then I'll go and see the San Francisco chief and get all the facts from him."

The doctor was looked up and found, still a practicing physician.

"Oh, yes, indeed, sir, I recall that case of suicide."

"I was called in before the beautiful, unfortunate young woman died, but could not save her," he said.

"Did she poison herself, sir?"

"No, indeed, she drove a knife to her heart."

"Could that be readily done, doctor?"

"Well, the knife was a very long-bladed affair, sharp at the point as a needle and keen as a razor."

"She had gone about it very deliberately, taking a seat in a low chair, drawing a high table up over her, and placing the hilt against it."

"The point just touched her flesh as she sat there, and by springing up suddenly she drove the weapon down into her body."

"It was a most diabolically cool suicide, and she meant to make no mistake."

"But her motive, doctor, when she had a loving husband and young daughter?"

"Ah! that was just it, for she had married Carroll, believing the one she loved was dead."

"Carroll was a splendid fellow, and rich, so her parents had deceived her, for they were poor."

"Long after she met the man she loved, and she at once took her own life, rather than go wrong, or live a wretched existence."

"And Mr. Carroll then went to Chicago?"

"Yes, he moved East, and I lost all track of him, for he wished to forget the past, having had two unhappy marriages."

"Indeed; he was married before, then?"

"Yes, when I first met him it was in the mines, where we were both seeking our fortunes, he by digging for gold, and I by getting hold of it after it was dug, for I was practicing medicine then in the mining-camps."

"Poor Carroll married a beautiful young girl, but one who all felt would give him trouble."

"The parents, as in the other case, made the match, and after the birth of a child the wife ran away and deserted him, going, it was said, with a former lover, a wild fellow by the name of Leffingwell."

"Leffingwell?" gasped Dick Doom.

"Yes, that was his name, I remember."

"He was doing well in the mines, but killed a man about this very girl, and had to fly for his life."

"Whether the woman ever went with him or not I cannot say, but I saw him one day in Omaha, some years ago, as I passed through, and he said he was living there."

"Omaha?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the child?"

"Well, Carroll was away at the time, and the child, an infant of a few weeks old, was taken very sick, and I was called in."

"It pulled through, as I thought, but soon after I heard that it had died, and been buried, and immediately after the woman left the house, and he said he was living there."

"Poor Carroll returned and used to haunt that little grave, the only consolation he had in life, for he did not seem to care for the money he made, and he was growing rich rapidly."

"Then he left, and somebody struck a lead which ran through the burying-ground."

"The baby's grave, with others, was disturbed, and what do you think was found in the coffin, which fell to pieces?"

"Nothing?"

"Why a large wax doll, which had been buried for the baby, showing that the guilty woman had run off with her child but wished Carroll to believe it dead."

"A girl was it, doctor?"

"No, a boy."

"Then Carroll, leaving the mines, came here, and I followed not long after and one day was called in to see his wife."

"His second wife?"

"Yes, the beautiful suicide."

"Poor fellow, I have always felt for him."

"But you say he is living in Chicago, now?"

"Yes, sir."

"And that his daughter committed suicide?"

"Yes, sir."

"She inherited the madness from her mother."

"But I have been in Europe the past two years, so failed to see an account of it."

"But did he ever know that his son was not dead, or at least had not died in infancy, for when I met him here I had not the heart to tell him, and really felt that with such a mother the boy would grow up bad and be a curse instead of a blessing to him."

"His son is with him now, sir."

"Ah! come for his heirship since the daughter's death?"

"Well, he was known before, sir, but I am not sure he was known as the son."

"But he is said to be a splendid fellow," and

Dick Doom told the doctor of how Leo Leffingwell had saved the life of his half-sister, and that rumor had it she had taken her life when she discovered him to be her brother."

CHAPTER XXII.

A TRAIL ON HORSEBACK.

THE doctor caught at the name Leffingwell, when spoken by Dick Doom.

"You say he was known as Leffingwell?"

"Yes, sir."

"That was the name of the man I spoke of, so the woman must have married him, after Carroll got his divorce from her."

"Yes, sir, it 'ould seem so."

"And the boy was given the name of the step-father."

"So it would seem, sir."

"And is the mother alive?"

"That I do not know, sir."

"But, doctor, I wish to thank you for your great kindness, as you refuse to accept remuneration for your valuable time, and I will send you the whole story of the affair, along with any new developments I may discover in the case."

"May I ask, sir, your motive in raking up these old things now?"

"I will tell you, sir, that I believe Miss Carroll did not commit suicide."

"Ah!"

"And I am determined to find out."

"I see; but her mother did, the girl heard of it and simply acted in the same way."

"One moment, sir?"

"Yes."

"Could a girl, lying back in an easy-chair, drive, with her left hand, a dagger nine inches long, one in width, to the hilt in her heart?"

"Was she left-handed?"

"No, sir."

"She could not."

"Could she do it with her right hand?"

"Hardly, for the moment the point touched the heart the downward movement must cease."

"But the hilt leant diagonally to the left."

"Indicating the left hand."

"Yes, sir."

"The blade was nine inches long?"

"Yes, sir."

"And was driven to the hilt?"

"To the very hilt, sir."

"That, to me, sir, would seem impossible."

"That is my theory, sir, and when I work it out I will send you my results."

"Thank you, Mr. Doom, I shall be most interested to know."

"And remember, the hands lay in the lap, there was no evidence of struggle, only that dagger in the heart."

"Then her hand never gave the wound," the doctor said firmly.

Thus they parted, and soon after Dick Doom was eastward bound.

He stopped off in Omaha, and at once consulted a Directory.

The name he looked for he found, and then went to the number.

A ring at the bell brought a lady to the door who said that the Leffingwells had lived there, but Mrs. Leffingwell had died some time before and the place had been sold to the present occupants.

Then Dick Doom sought the death records.

He discovered that Leonidas Leffingwell, speculator, had died several years before.

Kate Leffingwell, his widow, had died lately.

He went to the cemetery and found there a handsome monument upon which were the names of the husband and wife.

He also discovered in the marriage record of the court that Leonidas Leffingwell and Kate Lowndes Carroll had been married in Omaha upon a certain date fifteen years before.

The record of wills also showed that Leonidas Leffingwell had left his wife his sole heir, and that she, Kate Lowndes Leffingwell had left to her beloved son, Leo Leffingwell, her entire property, which was of considerable value, and that he had administered upon the estate, sold all the property in Nebraska and departed for parts unknown.

Then Dick Doom set out to find the former home of the said heir, Leo Leffingwell.

It was no easy task, but after a long and diligent search he discovered that just prior to the death of Mrs. Leffingwell a telegram had been sent from the Omaha office as follows:

"TO LEO LEFFINGWELL
"NORTH PLATTE,
"Nebraska.

"[Telegraph operator please send following to Little Blue Ranch, and expenses will be paid.] I am dying. Come to me at once.
MOTHER."

The detective, after showing his authority, had gotten a copy of this telegram.

Then he took the back trail on the railroad for North Platte.

Arriving there Dick Doom discovered, after a visit to the telegraph office, that the telegram had been delivered to a friend of Leo Leffingwell, who was his partner with him in a ranch, and happened to be spending a few days in town.

Anxious to learn all he could of Leo Leffingwell's antecedents, Dick Doom procured a horse and a guide and started on the sixty-five mile ride to Little Blue Ranch.

They camped on the way at night, and arrived the next day before noon.

There were three men at the ranch, and Dick Doom asked if Leo Leffingwell was there.

"No, pard, he hain't."

Of course Dick Doom expected this answer, but he had to give a motive for coming and so had asked for Leffingwell.

"Is he not about somewhere?"

"Well, no, he's a long way off, for he's gone down into New Mexico, to the mines."

"I am very sorry, for I wanted to see him."

"Has he been gone long?"

"Waal, he come here with a pard and bought this ranch, and we was cowboys for 'em."

"The pard wasn't here hardly any, but one day came and said as how a mine o' his in New Mexico had panned out rich, and they of course got the gold-fever and lighted out, leaving us to run their ranch, so we is doing it."

"When was this?"

The man gave the date.

"That was just at the time of his mother's death."

"We never heerd nothing of his mother's dying, pard."

"Did not his friend bring him a telegram from North Platte?"

"Never heard of it, pard," was the answer.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN UNERRING TRACKER.

DICK DOOM had decided to return at once to North Platte, but the response of the cowboy to his question about the telegram caused him to say:

"Well, my friends, I'd like to stay over here until to-morrow."

"You are more than welcome, pard, you is, for we has grub in plenty and cabin room."

Thus invited the ferret began his work of questioning.

"You see, my friends, I am in the law business and your late pard, Leffingwell, has had a fortune left him by his mother."

"Good for him, for he was a dandy fellow, game as a grizzly and with a heart in him like a deer."

"I am anxious to find him, you see, so I will have to go to New Mexico after him and I wish your aid in telling me about where I have to look for him there."

"But you say you did not hear of his mother's death?"

"Not a word."

"Just what day did he leave here?"

It was given.

"When did his friend come after him?"

"The day he come up from Platte they went away, for the pard seemed in a great hurry to be on the go."

"Were you here when he came?"

"We was."

"And what did he say?"

"That he was just up from Kearney and heard as how a mine he had in New Mexico was panning out big."

"A pard he had there working it he couldn't trust, so told Leffingwell to go right with him as it was the making of a fortune for both of them."

"Had they been friends long?"

"Well, they came up here together from Colorado, and I did hear say Leffingwell said he had saved his life there, some months before, and since then they had stuck together."

"Leffingwell had struck it rich in Colorado, and then sold out for what he thought was big money."

"But he had been given worthless paper for it, so was ruined, so come here and went to ranching, along with t'other fellow."

"What was his friend's name?"

"He called him Fritz, and he looked like a German, while he talked with a little foreign twist to his tongue."

"What kind of a looking fellow was Leffingwell?"

"A dandy from boot-heel to slouch."

"Describe him, please."

"He was a shadow over six feet, erect as a soldier and had a pair of fine shoulders on him."

"His beard was long, and his hair too, and of a yellow hue."

"In fact the two men were as like as two steers."

"But Barney here was a photo of Leffingwell, which he found after he left."

"Show it up, Barney."

Barney got the photograph from a crack in the logs and Dick Doom saw that it was taken in Leavenworth, Kansas, and the original was certainly a splendid looking man.

"Would you part with this, my friend?"

"Take it if it's any good to you, pard," was the answer.

Of Leo Leffingwell's career before his unlucky mining loss in Colorado, the men could tell nothing, while Fritz they said often went away from the ranch and was not liked as his pard was.

Both were men of education, the cowboys asserted, and Fritz sung well.

He also seemed to be the one who had the money.

After considerable questioning the detective got an idea of the locality, by a word dropped by Fritz, of where the mine was, and the trail they had taken to get there.

The next morning the ferret and his guide started upon the return to North Platte, and arriving there, Dick Doom at once sought the telegraph office.

"I wish to see the receipt book, sir, please, in which Mr. Leffingwell's friend signed for the telegram," he said.

He was shown the book and asked to have the name photographed, which was allowed, when he showed his authority.

The name was photographed at once, and a proof well finished was to be sent to Dick Doom's address in Chicago.

The name was Fritz Von Belo.

Then paying his guide liberally for his services Dick Doom took the train for Denver, whether Fritz had said to the cowboys they would go by rail and there get horses to ride on down to New Mexico.

He had ascertained from the guide that they had not gone to North Platte to sell their horses and take the train, but to Julesburg, for he had seen them there, he recalled.

Stopping at Julesburg Dick Doom discovered that two men, answering to the description of Leo Leffingwell and Fritz Von Belo had sold their horses there and bought tickets for Denver.

So to Denver he went, and although it was an old stamping-ground of his it was with the greatest difficulty that he was able to track his men, after the time that had elapsed.

But at last he traced them to an obscure hotel, and there on the books were their names, as follows:

"LEO LEFFINGWELL, New Mexico."

"FRITZ VON BELO, New Mexico."

"The landlady remembered the gentlemen, and that one had gone East from there by rail, called by a telegram, she said, which he had received there, and the other had bought a horse and outfit, and gone to New Mexico, she believed, to look after some mining property for both of them."

"Do you know what called the man East, madam?" was asked.

"I think he told me he had a telegram that his mother was dying."

Here was a quandary for the ferret.

Such a telegram had been sent from North Platte to Nebraska, yet Fritz had not, in the presence of the cowboys, delivered it.

So Dick Doom sought the telegraph office, and discovered that no such message had been received or delivered to either of the parties named, at the time they were in Denver.

This was a surprise, and he returned to the landlady.

"You are sure one of the men went East?"

"Oh, yes, for his friend rode off in the morning, to join a train of wagons going to Pueblo, and he waited and took the night train."

"Mr. Von Belo went South, then?"

"No, Mr. Von Belo went East, by rail."

"I guess you are mistaken, madam."

"Well, they are so much alike I may be; but my son will remember."

The son was called and asked the question as to which of the two men went East.

"Mr. Von Belo."

"You are sure?"

"I am, for I heard him tell Mr. Leffingwell that he was awful sorry the telegram called him East, but he could find the mine all right, and he would join him there later on, as soon as he

could do so, and to take full charge until he arrived."

"Ah, yes, I see," said Dick Doom, and thanking the landlady and her son for their kindness, he took the train soon after for Omaha.

His stay there was of short duration, for he continued on to Chicago the same day.

CHAPTER XXIV. WHEN DOCTORS AGREE.

THE Chicago chief of police had begun to wonder what had become of Dick Doom, when one morning the Ferret of the Golden Fettered entered his office.

"Ah! glad to see you, Doom."

"I had begun to think you had lost your mind trying to prove that Carroll suicide to have been a murder case."

"No, sir, I have been picking up tangled threads on the case, though."

"And have decided in favor of suicide?"

"On the contrary, chief, I am more than ever convinced that it was a case of murder."

"What have you discovered?" asked the chief, struck with the manner of the young ferret.

"Well, nothing to report yet, sir."

"But I hope to be able to make a statement soon."

"I hope so."

"I have been West, or I would have called in to see you."

"I missed you."

"I am still at the Grand Pacific if you need me, sir," and Dick Doom took his departure while the chief muttered:

"A very wonderful young man that, very."

"He has made his mark young, and will be heard of again I am sure."

"If he does make a murder out of that suicide, then I shall take off my hat to him as a phenomenon."

From the chief's office Dick Doom went to the cottage of Crumbs.

Crumbs was away, but Jule was there, so the ferret sat down for a talk with her.

He knew that he could get her to talk more freely without her husband being present, and so he said:

"Now, Mrs. Crumbs, as I told you, I wish to interest you in this affair, and will pay well for your services."

"Here is another payment in token of good faith, and I wish you to tell me all that you can about Miss Carroll, her habits, her lovers, and, in fact, all that you can think of about her."

"Tell me just why you went in search of her that night, and all that bears upon the case."

Jule's quick eye caught sight of the figure one hundred on the bank-note handed to her, and therefore was more than anxious to please her questioner.

So she told all she knew, the ferret making notes here and there.

At last he said:

"Do you recognize this photograph, Mrs. Crumbs?"

"Well, yes, sir, I think it is Mr. Leffingwell."

"You mean the present Mr. Carroll?"

"Yes, sir, and yet it does not now appear so like him, as I look at it more attentively."

"Wherein does it differ?"

"I hardly know, sir, for it has his broad shoulders, long hair and beard, only the expression is different."

"Mr. Carroll wears long hair, then, now?"

"Well, yes, sir; he did when I saw him last."

"And a long beard?"

"Yes, sir."

"What color was it?"

"A yellowish brown, sir, very handsome indeed, for he is a splendid-looking man as everybody says."

"Will you give me the address of the doctor, Mrs. Crumbs, who attended Miss Carroll?"

"Certainly, sir; here it is," and the address was handed to the ferret.

"Tell your husband that I called, and will be here to-morrow. He is acquainted with the butler now at the Carroll mansion, I presume?"

"Yes, sir. He knows him very well."

"Ask him to have the butler here to-morrow at ten o'clock."

"I will, sir."

From the cottage of Crumbs Dick Doom went to the doctor's.

He was fortunate in finding him at home, and said:

"Doctor, I am anxious to get certain facts from you, but I wish first your pledge that all I say will be taken in confidence, and all you may tell me I will so consider."

"In regard to what, sir?"

"Several of your patients, sir."

"Your time is valuable I know, so consider

me a rich patient if you will and charge accordingly, only, for the good of all concerned, all said between us must be in confidence."

"As I believe your motives honest, sir, I will so agree to your very remarkable request."

"You are, I believe, sir, Mr. Samuel Carroll's physician?"

"No, sir."

"Ah! I have been misinformed then!"

"I was Mr. Carroll's family physician, sir, for years; but his son seemed to feel that another doctor might benefit his father more, so I was dismissed."

"I see."

"But you were the physician called in at the time of Miss Carroll's murder?"

"Murder, sir? What do you mean?"

"Ah yes, suicide I believe?"

"Yes, sir, she committed suicide."

"You were called in, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you describe the case to me?"

"May I ask your reasons for knowing?"

"Not idle curiosity, rest assured, but a desire to do justice."

"A good motive surely."

"Now, sir, the case?"

"Well, I arrived to find that Miss Carroll had been discovered about daybreak, lying back in an easy-chair in the library, before the fire, with a dagger in her heart."

"Describe her position exactly, sir."

This the doctor did.

"She was then taken to her room, but life had been long gone."

"Now, doctor, was it possible that Miss Carroll could kill herself with that knife, which was driven from the left side, you say, and to the hilt?"

"I would not have believed it possible, sir; but seeing is believing."

"Would you take oath that her hand held the dagger that entered her heart?"

"My God, sir, what are you driving at?"

"Answer my question," was the stern response of the ferret.

CHAPTER XXV. ON HIS ROUNDS.

THE doctor was evidently surprised at the turn affairs were taking and regarded the ferret fixedly before he replied.

Then he said:

"Since you put it thus I will say that I would not swear to it."

"Was Miss Carroll left handed?"

"No, sir."

"Was she ambidextrous?"

"She was not."

"Would she have attempted to drive a dagger to her heart with her left-hand?"

"I should think not, sir."

"Could she have driven nine inches of steel to the hilt?"

"No, sir, now I look at it from your standpoint."

"According to your knowledge of her form, how much of that blade was in her heart, from the point where it entered her heart?"

"Well, sir, all of three inches."

"Thank you, doctor, for your opinion."

"But had you no thought that this might not have been suicide?"

"I confess that I had, but the knowledge that her mother had so killed herself, and that her jewels and the money in the safe had not been disturbed, caused me to feel that it surely could not have been a burglar who did the deed."

"Well, sir, I am glad to get your views on this case, and I would like to know if you ever suspected that it was in the nature of Miss Carroll to have taken her own life?"

"On the contrary, sir, I did not believe it possible, for I heard her say, when a friend of hers suicided, that she could never fly from sorrow or pain by taking her own life."

"If disappointed in love, she said, she would become a recluse, and if she became a chronic invalid then she would bear her sufferings to the end."

"She said this?"

"Yes, sir."

"To you?"

"Yes, when I told her of her friend's death from having been crossed in love."

"I thank you, doctor."

"Please name your fee."

"Nothing, I assure you, sir, and if, as I believe, you are on the track of a new feature upon this sad case, command me if I can serve you."

Thanking the doctor, Dick Doom took his leave, and made his way to the home of Mr. Wheatley.

That gentlemen greeted him in his courtly, pleasant manner, although a stranger.

Then Dick Doom made known the reason of his coming.

"I wish to ask you, Mr. Wheatley, about your friend Mr. Samuel Carroll?"

"Poor Carroll; is he very much worse?"

"Well, sir, I have heard that he was ill, yet is it serious?"

"I very much fear so, for we were the best of friends and now we are as strangers."

"His mind is unsettled by his afflictions I am sure, for somehow he bade me not to visit him any more, saying his son was all he needed now."

"And you are not his friend now?"

"His devoted friend, sir, only his son seemed to feel that his father was worried by my coming and I at once gave up my visits."

"It's his sorrows, sir, and he has had a weight of them that would have killed most men."

"So I have heard, sir."

"But my motive in calling was to learn all I could about Mr. Carroll's daughter's death, as I am engaged in working out just such cases for the good of the public."

"Now I have heard you were there on the occasion, and I would like to have your opinion of the murder."

"My dear sir, it was a case of suicide, not murder."

"Ah, did I say murder?"

"Well, might it not have been a murder?"

"I feared that it was, sir, until we discovered the cause of the suicide."

"And you knew the cause?"

"Well, sir, to be frank with you, I think it was a case of unrequited affection."

"The affair is all over now, you know, and I do not believe I can do any harm in saying that Miss Clarice loved one whom she could not marry and so ended her life, driven to it, perhaps, from having inherited a morbid feeling of the kind from her mother, who died by her own hand."

"That is all there is to it, sir."

"I thank you, sir; but it is a pity that in his last years Mr. Carroll has been deprived of your friendship."

"Well, it seems that he wishes nothing to remind him of the past, for the servants were sent away, the horses and carriages sold, the library where the tragedy occurred was torn down and the house was refurnished."

"Why, sir, Sam Carroll even changed his family physician, so I cannot complain that he gave up my friendship, even though I deeply deplore it."

"And his son?"

"Is a noble fellow and devotes himself to his father continuously."

"That must be a blessing to Mr. Carroll in his ill health."

"It is indeed, sir, and it was fortunate that his son turned up as he did to cheer him, or the blow of his daughter's death would have driven him mad I am sure."

"It was a cruel blow, sir, but let me thank you for your kindness to me," and Dick Doom left the bachelor home of William Wheatley muttering to himself as he walked along:

"Every servant dismissed, the library torn down, mansion refurnished, carriages and horses sold, and replaced by others, his old friends given up, the doctor turned off, and his son alone his comforter."

"This looks to me like a very strange case, indeed."

"To-morrow I will have an interview with the butler, and then I will have no one else to interview, I guess, so can act as I deem best."

CHAPTER XXVI. THE NEW BUTLER.

TRUE to the appointment made, Dick Doom, when he went to the Crumbs cottage, found there the Carroll butler, who was introduced to him as James Belt.

Crumbs and Jule retired while the ferret had a talk with the butler, who was a cunning-faced Englishman.

"Mr. Belt, I wish to ask you if you are willing to accept another situation, that will pay you far better than the one you now have?"

"Well, sir, I live to make a living, sir."

"So I thought, and I can offer you a place as valet."

"To whom, sir?"

"Well, to myself, but I will be called away for quite awhile, so will have to leave you at the Grand Pacific, to await my return."

"Of course you will have good accommodations, but nothing to do until my return."

"Yes, sir, but my pay goes on all the same?"

"Oh, yes, of course."

"And I gets forty a month now, sir."

"As Crumbs speaks of you so highly, I'll give you fifty."

"Now, I have a young man that I wish to get a place for as butler, and I'll give you fifty dollars in cash if you can put him in your position."

"I can do it, sir, I know."

"All right. Simply say you are going away, and have a friend to put in your place."

"Yes, sir; it will be all right, sir, for I engages the help, and I'll tell the master I puts the man in my place until my return."

"Where is he, sir?"

"I'll send him to your address this afternoon, and you can see how he does about the house, and the table."

"Yes, sir, just send him to me, sir, James Belt, butler at Carroll mansion, —— avenue, Hyde Park."

"All right, and here are your fifty dollars, so you had better come with me now to the hotel to see how things are, as I will be away when you arrive to-morrow."

"Yes, sir."

Getting upon the box with the driver of the carriage, while his employer got inside, the butler found himself in a short while at the Grand Pacific Hotel.

The detective had engaged a parlor and bedroom, with a small room next for his valet, and James Belt was presented at the office as his valet who would come and take charge the next day.

Then the butler hastened home again and let it be known in the servants' hall that he was called away by serious illness in his family, but had secured a man in his place.

At luncheon he made bold, he said, to tell Mr. Leo Carroll of his going, and his having secured even a better man than himself.

"All right, Belt, so long as he is a good man; but if he is worthless out he goes," said Leo Carroll.

"I wish we could have Crumbs back again, my son, for he was such an able man, and so kindly in his way," said Mr. Samuel Carroll, who had greatly changed since his daughter's suicide, in spite of his son's devoted attention."

"If you wish him, father, all right, I will look him up; but I never liked the man."

"Then we won't have him, Leo, no, indeed," was the answer.

At four o'clock the new butler arrived.

He had a livery similar to that of Belt, and was a slender, sprightly fellow with small side whiskers, glasses, and hair parted in the middle, while his accent was English enough to please the greatest of American Anglomaniacs.

"My name is Pry, sir, Silas Pry," he said, to Belt, who was delighted with him.

He found the new man ready to learn, quick as lightning, and he brought the very best of recommendations as to his honesty and ability.

The old butler took great delight in introducing the new one to the servants, and saw that he made a good impression on them.

To Leo Carroll he said:

"He's most thorough, sir, and his only objection is his glasses."

"I'm delighted to know that he wears glasses."

"It is a new fad in butlers."

"What is his name, Belt?"

"Silas Pry, sir."

"What a name, yet what's in a name," laughed Mr. Carroll, and soon after Pry came in with the soup.

Belt stood watching him with eagle eye, but not a fault could he find in the new man's service.

"He is simply perfect, father," said Leo Carroll after dinner.

"Yes, I like him, my son."

"He is so gentle with me," was the answer.

After dinner Belt said to the new man:

"You are a good one."

"I'll drink your very good health, Mr. Pry."

"Thank you, sir, but I never indulge."

"A butler who never drinks," cried Belt in surprise.

Then he showed Pry to his room, and gave him further instructions, after which he went to say good-by to the two masters.

"Well, my man, good-by and success to you."

"Here's a little change for you," and Mr. Carroll handed him several five-dollar bills.

"Good-by, Belt, and let me say that you won't let us miss you as your friend is such a good man."

"Let me see; there is a month and two days coming to you?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'll make it two months," and the money

was handed over to the delighted butler, who looked it over when he got into the hall and said:

"Fifty for getting Pry the place, twenty from the old man, and forty from the young one—one hundred and ten in all, and ten dollars more a month and nothing to do but to travel."

"James Belt, you are in great luck."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE UNTIRING FERRET.

THE new butler had not been long in his place before he won his way to the hearts of all those who dwelt at the Carroll mansion.

The cook was delighted with him, the house girl thought him "just charming," the kitchen girl said that he even treated her with marked respect, and the gardener, coachman and stable boy voted him a trump, while Brush, the valet who acted for both Mr. Samuel Carroll and his son, said he was "a very nice man."

But better than these opinions were those expressed by the old gentleman and Leo Carroll.

They were more than pleased with him, for he was devoted to the comforts of Mr. Samuel Carroll, and no matter what hour he came home, Leo Carroll found him ready to receive him.

Some few weeks after his arrival at the mansion Brush was taken ill, but instead of allowing a new valet to be secured Silas Pry at once said he could and would do the work until the sick man recovered.

In this work he proved himself just as able as he was as a butler, and his care of the old gentleman was really touching.

His devotion to the son was equally as great also, and Leo said one day:

"We have a gem in that man, father."

"We have indeed, my son."

"I have been better ever since he came, I do believe," was the answer.

"Yes, it is his care of you, father."

Just six weeks after the arrival of the new butler he was taken seriously ill one day.

Brush was able to resume his duties, and so helped out as butler for a day or two.

Then a letter came from a doctor that Silas Pry was too ill to return, and was going to his home in Michigan, but to keep his place open for him if possible.

The very day that Silas Pry was taken ill and had to leave the Carroll mansion Dick Doom returned to the Grand Pacific Hotel.

He found Belt there enjoying his idleness and flirting with the chambermaids, and startled him by saying:

"Pack up your traps, Belt, and go out to board with Crumbs until my return, for I am again called away."

"But let me give you a piece of good advice, and that is to keep away from the Carroll mansion, and avoid being seen by the servants, for that butler has left there, and until I can come back to prove your innocence in certain matters, you had best remain in hiding."

"I'll do it, sir, I'll do it," cried the terrified Belt, perhaps hurt by a guilty conscience of some act of guilt in the past.

To alarm him the more Dick Doom put him in a carriage, to drive up to the cottage of Crumbs, and Belt pulled down the curtains while *en route*, considering himself a marked man, from all that Dick Doom had given him to understand about his having met Mr. Leo Carroll, whom he knew well, and inferring that what he had heard came from that gentleman.

Among Jule's accomplishments was reading French, and Belt carried a note to her in that language from Dick Doom.

Its contents were:

"Keep Belt at your home until my return. Do not let him go out, or see any one. I will pay liberally all expenses."

Just as soon as the vehicle rolled away, with the frightened Belt inside, another departed for the depot, with Dick Doom.

His ticket was purchased to Santa Fe, New Mexico, via St. Louis, and he took a sleeper through as far as it went.

It was a long ride, but in due time Santa Fe was reached, and after a short rest at the hotel the untiring detective started out upon another trail.

This time his trail was to find Leo Leffingwell, after he had left Denver on his way South. It was no easy task, but money makes men energetic, and after two days' hard work Dick Doom struck a clew.

The clew which Dick Doom found was that on a certain date, which about compared with his idea of the time it should have been, a man by

the name of Leffingwell had arrived in Santa Fe and came in company with a wagon-train.

He had stayed but one day in town and the hotel was named.

Thither Dick Doom went and there was the name he sought upon the books.

The landlord told him that Mr. Leffingwell had taken a guide there to go to a certain part of the mining country, and he would find the man for him.

He was soon found, a Mexican guide by the name of Juan, and who spoke English well.

"You guided Mr. Leffingwell from here upon such and such a date?"

"Yes, senor."

"Where did you take him?"

"To the mining country, senor."

"You know the place?"

"Well, senor."

"Did Mr. Leffingwell find the place he sought?"

"Oh yes senor, and he said a friend of his would come along some day and he would write him to look up Juan the guide."

"Yes."

"Are you his friend, senor?"

"I am, and I will pay you well to guide me to him."

"I will be glad to, senor."

"When do you start?"

"At once," was the decided response.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FOUND.

In a wild part of the mining country of New Mexico, a man sat in front of an humble cabin one pleasant Sunday afternoon, apparently enjoying the beautiful scenery about him, for a book lay near him where he had cast it aside some time before.

The book was in German and was a copy of Schiller.

A violin was upon a bench near, and upon a rude table were pen, ink and paper.

The man was of striking appearance.

Tall, splendidly formed, darkly bronzed but with strikingly handsome face, and with dark-blue eyes full of expression.

His hair was worn long, hanging upon his broad shoulders, and his beard fell to his waist, both hair and beard being of a rich brown hue.

About his waist was a belt of arms; his pants were stuck in the tops of high boots, he wore a blue woolen shirt, and upon his head was a sombrero.

The appearance of the man, in spite of his rude surroundings, indicated refinement and one who knew the world.

"I must write to my pard again and know why he does not come, for though the mine pans out far less than he expected, it certainly will give us a good start and pays better than a cattle ranch with few hoofs upon it."

"I cannot understand his saying that I must keep the mine as my own, as he has struck it rich North."

"I must understand him better, for I have no claim upon this mine other than what he gives me, and I don't like the hints of some of the miners that he got it by killing one who was his pard."

"He told me a friend of his had died and left it to him, and that he had placed a man in charge, who was to work it."

"Then came news that the man had found gold in paying quantities, for he met some one who told him so, and so we started together and he now leaves me in full possession."

"I don't exactly like it either."

"He saved my life that day in Abilene, and I have stuck to him ever since; but there is something very mysterious about my pard, beyond my finding out."

"I will write him again and see what he says, for I do not wish always to dwell in the wilderness."

"Ah! there comes some one up the trail."

"Yes, two horsemen."

He glanced down into the valley and beheld two horsemen, and saw them turn into a trail which led to his cabin.

As they drew nearer the miner recognized one of the men and called out:

"Ho, Juan, how are you, old man?"

"I thought at first you had my pard with you."

"I have, senor."

"Pardon me, sir, but Juan was so told by me, to get him to guide me here."

"You are Mr. Leffingwell?"

"Yes, sir."

"Leo Leffingwell?"

"That is the name I lay claim to, sir."

"How can I serve you?"

"I have come from Chicago, Mr. Leffingwell, especially to see you."

"You are welcome, sir; but you have the advantage of knowing me, while I do not recall having met you."

"Neither have you, sir."

"But my name is Dick Doom."

"I am glad to meet you, sir."

"Come out to dig yellow dirt, I suppose?"

"No, sir, I came just to see you."

"Indeed! then you must have come from my friend."

"What friend?"

"Fritz Von Belo."

"Yes, sir, I come from Mr. Fritz Von Belo," and Dick Doom threw himself into a camp chair and after a short hesitation said:

"Now, Mr. Leffingwell, while Juan has gone to stake the horses out I wish a talk with you."

"When he returns, just ask him to get dinner for us, so as to keep him occupied, for I have something of great importance to tell you."

"All right, Mr. Doom, fire away," was the cheery rejoinder.

"You will pardon me if I touch first upon painful matters, but Leffingwell is not your real name."

"Ah!"

"No, it is Carroll, for your mother married a second time, after being divorced from her first husband and you took your step-father's name."

"My mother has sent you to me, sir."

"No, for I regret to convey to you the sad news of your mother's death."

"Dead! my mother dead."

"Mr. Doom, let me tell you that I have only once each year dared write to my mother."

"My step-father drove me from my home, and I went to sea for years, visiting foreign lands."

"I returned to the United States, having made a snug little fortune and sought my mother to again be refused permission to remain near her."

"I invested my money, lost it, and came to the frontier and have worked when I could for a living."

"I have told you the story of my life, sir, and now I learn from you that my mother is dead."

"You shall hear all, sir, for that is why I am here."

"Do you know your own father?"

"I do not, for that is a secret that my mother never told me."

"It seemed to be a dark page of the past which she did not wish me to read."

"I will tell it to you, sir."

"Your father is one of the noblest of men, and I saw him but ten days ago."

"He is a millionaire, married a second time and lost his daughter."

"Your mother was divorced from him, married Leonidas Leffingwell and he is dead."

"Yes, I heard so, but I sent my address to my mother and she never replied."

"She telegraphed you that she was dying, and to come to her."

"I never received it, God knows, or I would have walked to her."

"The man whom you deemed your friend got that telegram and saw in it enough to try and impersonate you, with his striking resemblance to you."

"What?"

"I repeat it, sir. He impersonated you."

"Fritz Von Belo?"

"Yes."

"Was such a traitor?"

"He was. It is true."

"Where is he?"

"First let me tell you that he went to your dying mother, claimed to be her son, *yourself*, and received from her a written confession—which, allow me to give to you."

"Ha! where did you get this?"

"From among his private papers, for I lived in the house with him for six weeks, and I am a detective upon his track."

"Read that confession at your leisure, but, let me tell you that he used it to play a bold game for fortune and position."

"He went to your old father, told him he was you—his son, and led him to believe the story, for with the facts in his possession, and not known to him, the old gentleman could but believe the story, especially as he had other claims upon him which had endeared him to him."

"How do you know all this?"

"I told you that I was a detective, sir."

"True."

"Let me tell you that I have been to your mother's home and grave in Omaha, that I went to Little Blue Ranch, in Nebraska, tracked you

to Julesburg, got a copy of the telegram sent you by your mother to North Platte, went to Denver after you, then to Chicago to get the links of my chain of evidence of your pretended friend's guilt, welded together, and now am here to tell you all and take you back with me."

"Now read that confession and then we will talk together more, for here comes Juan."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE FERRET'S CONFESSION.

MR. SAMUEL CARROLL had certainly improved in health during the time that Silas Pry was acting as butler and valet at the mansion; but, after his departure, he began to go down again.

He was delighted, therefore, to see Silas Pry come in one day and ask for his place again.

The butler then at the mansion was given a month's pay and discharged and Silas Pry resumed his former place.

Mr. Leo Carroll was away on a run to St. Louis for a few days, so Samuel Carroll told Brush that Pry would look out for his comfort that night, and he could have a night off.

"Now, Mr. Carroll, I wish to have a talk with you, sir," said Silas Pry, when the old gentleman was in his room.

"I wish you to listen to all that I have to say, and I know all that you have suffered in the past."

"If I give you pain now, it will be but temporary, for there is one near to comfort your old age."

"I know the influence that Mr. Leo holds over you, and that you do not lean upon him as you would wish, for—"

"See here, Pry."

"Bear with me, sir, for I mean all that I say for your good."

"I wish to tell you that all of us are deceived in life, and that you have been greatly deceived by one you trusted in."

"You had a son in the long ago, and he did not die, as you then believed."

"All the story told by Leo is true about his mother's confession and death, and your son being alive now."

"But, he is not your son, sir."

"Good God, man! are you mad, or am I?"

"Neither of us, sir; but your true son is now here in Chicago, and a most noble man."

"You will recognize your own flesh and blood the moment you behold him, and you will know that the man who has impersonated him is the cleverest impostor alive to-day—the most brazen scoundrel and daring and brilliant adventurer."

"See, sir, look at these badges upon my breast."

"They show me as worthy of belief, for I am Dick Doom, the detective, known as the Ferret of the Golden Fettlers."

"It was I who took Belt from your service, and got his place, and I sent your valet, Brush, away ill, to play my hand in his stead."

"When I came into this house I began to watch the man who calls himself your son."

"I soon discovered that the cause of your ill health was that he was slowly but surely poisoning you."

"My God, have mercy!"

"You know that you improved under my care."

"I did, I did!"

"It was because I did not let you take the medicine each night given you by your son."

"I have had it all analyzed, and know just what it is."

"I knew that he was seeking to kill you, to get your wealth, and he well-nigh was successful."

"He discharged the old servants because he feared them."

"He made you give up your old physician, banished Mr. Wheatley, your best friend, and had all his own way."

"He refurbished the house, had the library rebuilt, and got rid of all that would remind him of your daughter."

"That he did save your daughter's life is true, for he is a brave fellow, I admit."

"But he used the act to help him to fortune."

"He pretended not to seek you, and yet did so."

"He told you of his life, of his mother, and won you over."

"And to do all this he was trying to sacrifice your own son, for he found out just how matters stood as the two were friends, and he opened your son's letters and telegrams."

"He sent him down into New Mexico to get rid of him, and he came here to revel in your wealth."

"But I read the accounts of your sorrows and the tragedy."

"I took the idea, for I study all cases that come before my notice, that your daughter never committed suicide."

"My poor child!"

"I studied up the case from the hotel fire up to the present time, and I had a splendid chance when I was here as Silas Pry."

"I watched my man day and night, and I have heard him awake from a nightmare and cry out in terror."

"I heard him talk in his sleep, and I tell you on my honor, Mr. Carroll, that that man came here to rob Miss Carroll of her jewels, perhaps you of your money in the safe, for he waited until she, knowing the combination, opened it."

"He got a key that fitted your door, for I have the key and know to whom it was sold and where it was purchased."

"He slipped in, hid himself behind the curtains and started to frighten Miss Carroll into swooning."

"She must have recognized him, for I have heard him say again and again in his sleep:

"Oh! if she had not said that she knew me in spite of my mask, I would never have struck that blow."

"Others have never haunted me, but you do, yes, you do, my Clarice!"

Mr. Carroll was trembling all over, his face white, but his eyes riveted upon the ferret, who paused as he uttered the last words.

"I believe all you tell me."

"Something in my heart and brain tells me it is true."

"Tell me more."

"I am sure, Mr. Carroll, that he struck that blow, to avoid being branded."

"That he placed her in the chair, and did not rob the safe, for he saw that there was a greater game to play in pretending to be your son."

"I know how well he has played his game through life, and let me tell you, Mr. Carroll, that you and I have met before."

"When you were here?"

"No sir, before that, for I was the detective on the steamer going South who had two prisoners, one of whom leaped overboard in his irons."

"Ah, yes, I remember now, I remember."

"But you said my own son was alive!"

"He is, sir, and you shall see him, for I sent that impostor to St. Louis on a false telegram, so that we could have full sway, sir."

"Your son is in the library now, and I will call him, while, let me tell you that he knows all," and Dick Doom left the room to call the real Leo Carroll.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FATAL CHAIR.

Of the meeting between the father and son, let us not speak.

The reader can well understand that it was a touching one, and doubly so to the grief-haunted old man.

But blood is thicker than water, and in the miner he knew in his heart that his own son was before him.

It was late into the night that the two talked together, Dick Doom still retaining his place as butler and valet combined.

He deemed it best, for it would not do to let the servants suspect that aught was going on of a secret nature, and Brush had been again called away, so that Pry had the field to himself.

At midnight Leo Carroll left the mansion, and after a talk with the detective, started for the hotel where he was staying.

The next night the impostor was to return, for he had been telegraphed to, to return at once to his father.

In the evening Leo Carroll went up to the mansion and was ushered into the library by Pry.

He was accompanied by a gentleman in a high hat and stylish suit of black, and few would have recognized without his uniform the Chicago chief of police.

At the proper time the detective sent the Carroll carriage to the depot for "Mr. Leo," and when its wheels were heard on the gravel drive in the grounds, Mr. Carroll who was talking in the library, arose and retired to a hallway.

Then the door was opened by the detective, and he faced the man he so remorselessly had tracked down.

"Some gentlemen in the library to see you, sir," he announced.

"Who are they, Pry?"

"Some club friends, sir."

"Ah! and how is my father?"

"Better, sir—much better."

The man then strode toward the library door; the detective threw it open and closed it quickly behind him as he followed.

"Ah, Von Belo! glad to see you," said the real Leo Carroll, who had his back turned toward the door.

"Great God! Leffingwell, when did you arrive? I am delighted to see you."

But the face was as white as death now, and the start and exclamation had shown his terror.

Then he had recovered himself and it flashed through his mind that he had simply been found by his minor friend, and supposed that he knew nothing as to Samuel Carroll being his father; so he intended to play his bold game through to the end.

But, Leo Carroll faced him fairly and said sternly:

"And I am glad to meet you, Valentine Gibson, the escaped murderer, and welcome you to my hospitality!"

The man staggered back as though struck a heavy blow, while from his white lips came the words:

"Who calls me Valentine Gibson?"

"I call you Valentine Gibson the murderer," and quick as a flash, Dick Doom had grasped his wrists and clasped upon them the Golden Fetter.

To have saved his life the hunted down wretch could not have resisted Dick Doom's quick action, and almost overcome by the thought that his bold game had been discovered—that the gallows loomed up once more before him—he tottered back and dropped into a chair.

"My God, man, that is the chair you murdered Clarice Carroll in," cried Dick Doom.

With a yell of horror the man sprung from the chair, and then, with a shriek of agony inexpressible, dropped his length upon the floor, where he lay motionless.

"Is he dead?" cried Mr. Carroll, rushing into the room.

"No, sir, he is worse than dead, for I think he has gone mad," was Dick Doom's impressive rejoinder, and a silence as though in a death-room fell upon all present.

CONCLUSION.

The doctor, the old family physician, was sent for and came quickly.

The meeting between him and Mr. Carroll was touching, for he was welcomed back, as was also William Wheatley, who followed him. The ferret had sent for these two that they might be near their old friend and cheer him.

Then, too, Mr. Carroll found in the house Crumbs once more reinstated as butler, and Julie his wife as up-stairs girl, while Nancy the cook was in the kitchen. In fact all of the old servants had been re-engaged by the detective and Leo Carroll, the others having been dismissed with a month's pay ahead.

The doctor's examination of the prisoner caused him to say:

"The man may die without returning to consciousness; but should he return to life he will be a madman—a maniac."

At last the prisoner, with the Golden Fetter upon his wrists, rallied and arose to his feet.

There was a wild look in his eyes as he whispered, abject terror stamped on his death-white face.

"Who said that I killed her?"

"She alone saw me. She recognized me! I had to do it."

"Come, Gibson, come with me," and Dick Doom led his prisoner unresistingly away, accompanied by the chief of police.

It had been decided by Mr. Carroll and his son, that they would try and keep the affair from the papers by starting at once together upon an extended European tour, and changing their home upon their return to some other city.

This they did; and though rumors were afloat, the public never did get hold of the exact situation and facts of the startling case.

As for Dick Doom he took his prisoner to New Orleans, where already he was under sentence of death, and on the way learned from his incoherent talk how he had known that he could slip his irons off over his small hands and feet, and being a tireless swimmer, had leaped into the sea, freed himself of his manacles and had swum to a vessel becalmed, which he had his eye upon, and had stated that he had fallen overboard from the steamer.

The vessel had carried him to a South American port, and after numerous wanderings, for he had his diamonds and some money with him, he had met Leo and Clarice Carroll and played

the bold game which the Ferret of the Golden Fetter had discovered and finally had baffled.

Instead of to the gallows the man went to the mad-house, while Dick Doom once more started out on Secret Service trails, still armed with his Golden Fetter.

THE END.

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